

WALTER DE LA MARE

SELECTED STORIES AND VERSES

It is with pride that we publish in Puffin Story Books this volume of stories and verses by Walter de la Mare, one of the greatest writers who has ever used the greatest gifts for the delight of children. Everything he writes comes to us in a crystalline perfection, as though it had been held a long time in that wise, poetic mind before being put down on paper. Every word is deliberate, significant. The stories have far more than their obvious tale to leave with the reader, and reveal rich hidden treasure on successive readings.

His poetry, particularly for young readers, can be a world of adventure, a browsing ground in which to discover what words can say and do. It is rich in subjects, moods, feeling, original in the use of rhyme and rhythm, full of humour, full of meaning.

This selection of 41 poems comes mainly from *Songs of Childhood*, *Peacock Pie*, and *Bells and Grass*. They are all to be found in his *Collected Rhymes and Verses*.



WALTER DE LA MARE

*Selected
Stories and
Verses*



PENGUIN BOOKS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH FABER AND FABER

*This selection is made from
'Collected Stories for Children' (1947) and
'Collected Rhymes and Verses' (1944)
and was first published in Puffin Story Books, 1952*

*Made and printed in Great Britain
for Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex
by Hunt, Barnard & Co, Ltd, Aylesbury
Cover designed by R. Kennedy
and printed by John Swain and Son Ltd, Barnet, Herts*

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Two Deep Clear Eyes

Two deep clear eyes,
Two ears, a mouth, a nose,
Ten supple fingers,
And ten nimble toes,
Two hands, two feet, two arms, two legs,
And a heart through which love's blessing flows

Eyes bid ears
Hark
Ears bid eyes
Mark
Mouth bids nose
Smell
Nose says to mouth,
I will
Heart bids mind
Wonder
Mind bids heart
Ponder

Arms, hands, feet, legs,
Work, play, stand, walk,
And a jump little tongue in a honey-sweet mouth,
With rows of teeth due North and South,
Does nothing but talk, talk, talk.

his fear and fury he shut up his sister from them, and because he was sullen and stupid Yet he did nothing but fret himself. He set traps for them, and caught starlings; he fired his blunderbuss at them under the moon, and scared his sheep; he set dishes of sour milk in their way, and sticky leaves and brambles where their rings were green in the meadows; but all to no purpose When at dusk, too, he heard their faint, elfin music, he would sit in the door blowing into his father's great bassoon till the black forest echoed with its sad, solemn, wooden voice But that was of no help either At last he grew so surly that he made Griselda utterly miserable Her cheeks lost their scarlet and her eyes their sparkling Then the fairies began to plague John in earnest – lest their lovely, loved child of man, Griselda, should die.

Now one summer's evening – and most nights are cold in the Great Forest – John, having put away his mournful bassoon and bolted the door, was squatting, moody and gloomy, with Griselda, on his hearth beside the fire And he leaned back his great hairy head and stared straight up the chimney to where high in the heavens glittered a host of stars. And suddenly, while he lolled there on his stool moodily watching them, there appeared against the dark sky a mischievous elvish head secretly peeping down at him; and busy fingers began sprinkling dew on his wide upturned face. He heard the laughter too of the fairies mitching and gambolling on his thatch, and in a rage he started up, seized a round Dutch cheese that lay on a platter, and with all his force threw it clean and straight up the sooty chimney at the faces of mockery clustered above And after that, though Griselda sighed at her spinning wheel, he heard no more. Even the cricket that had been

whistling all through the evening fell silent, and John supped on his black bread and onions alone.

Next day Griselda woke at dawn and put her head out of the little window beneath the thatch, and the day was white with mist.

'Twill be another hot day,' she said to herself, combing her beautiful hair

But when John went down, so white and dense with mist were the fields, that even the green borders of the forest were invisible, and the whiteness went to the sky Swathing and wreathing itself, opal and white as milk, all the morning the mist grew thicker and thicker about the little house When John went out about nine o'clock to peer about him, nothing was to be seen at all He could hear his sheep bleating, the kettle singing, Griselda sweeping, but straight up above him hung only, like a small round fruit, a little cheese-red beamless sun – straight up above him, though the hands of the clock were not yet come to ten. He clenched his fists and stamped in sheer rage But no-one answered him, no voice mocked him but his own For when these idle, mischievous fairies have played a trick on an enemy they soon weary of it.

All day long that little sullen lantern burned above the mist, sometimes red, so that the white mist was dyed to amber, and sometimes milky pale The trees dripped water from every leaf Every flower asleep in the garden was neckleted with beads, and nothing but a drenched old forest crow visited the lonely cottage that afternoon to cry 'Kah, Kah, Kah!' and fly away

But Griselda knew her brother's mood too well to speak of it, or to complain. And she sang on gaily in the house, though she was more sorrowful than ever

Miss T.

It's a very odd thing –
As odd as can be –
That whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T.;
Porridge and apples,
Mince, muffins and mutton,
Jam, junket, jumbles –
Not a rap, not a button
It matters; the moment
They're out of her plate,
Though shared by Miss Butcher
And sour Mr Bate,
Tiny and cheerful,
And neat as can be,
Whatever Miss T. eats
Turns into Miss T.



The Dutch Cheese

Once – once upon a time there lived, with his sister Griselda, in a little cottage near the Great Forest, a young farmer whose name was John. Brother and sister, they lived alone, except for their sheep-dog, Sly, their flock of sheep, the numberless birds of the forest, and the 'fairies' John loved his sister beyond telling, he loved Sly, and he delighted to listen to the birds singing at twilight round the darkening margin of the forest. But he feared and hated the fairies. And, having a very stubborn heart, the more he feared, the more he hated them, and the more he hated them, the more they pestered him.

Now these were a tribe of fairies, sly, small, gay-hearted, and mischievous, and not of the race of fairies noble, silent, beautiful, and remote from man. They were a sort of gipsy-fairies, very nimble and of airy and prankish company, and partly for mischief and partly for love of her they were always trying to charm John's dear sister Griselda away, with their music and fruits and trickery. He more than half believed it was they who years ago had decoyed into the forest not only his poor old father, who had gone out faggot-cutting in his sheepskin hat with his ass, but his mother, too, who soon after had gone out to look for him.

But fairies, even of this small tribe, hate no man. They mocked him and mischiefed him, they spilt his milk, rode astraddle on his rams, garlanded his old ewes with sow-thistle and briony, sprinkled water on his kindling wood, loosed his bucket into the well, and hid his great leather shoes. But all this they did, not for hate – for they came and went like evening moths about Griselda – but because in

Next day John went out to tend his flocks. And wherever he went the red sun seemed to follow. When at last he found his sheep they were drenched with the clinging mist and were huddled together in dismay. And when they saw him it seemed that they cried out with one unanimous bleating voice:

‘O ma-a-a-ster!’

And he stood counting them. And a little apart from the rest stood his old ram Soll, with a face as black as soot; and there, perched on his back, impish and sharp and scarlet, rode and tossed and sang just such another fairy as had mocked John from the chimney-top. A fire seemed to break out in his body, and, picking up a handful of stones, he rushed at Soll through the flock. They scattered, bleating, out into the mist. And the fairy, all-acockahoop on the old ram’s back, took its small ears between finger and thumb, and as fast as John ran, so fast jogged Soll, till all the young farmer’s stones were thrown, and he found himself alone in a quagmire so sticky and befogged that it took him till afternoon to grope his way out. And only Griselda’s singing over her broth-pot guided him at last home.

Next day he sought his sheep far and wide, but not one could he find. To and fro he wandered, shouting and calling and whistling to Sly, till heartsick and thirsty, they were both wearied out. Yet bleatings seemed to fill the air, and a faint, beautiful bell tolled on out of the mist; and John knew the fairies had hidden his sheep, and he hated them more than ever.

After that he went no more into the fields, brightly green beneath the enchanted mist. He sat and sulked, staring out of the door at the dim forests far away, glimmering faintly red beneath the small red sun. Griselda could not sing any

more, she was too tired and hungry. And just before twilight she went out and gathered the last few pods of peas from the garden for their supper.

And while she was shelling them, John, within doors in the cottage, heard again the tiny timbrels and the distant horns, and the odd, clear, grasshopper voices calling and calling her, and he knew in his heart that, unless he relented and made friends with the fairies, Griselda would surely one day run away to them and leave him forlorn. He scratched his great head, and gnawed his broad thumb. They had taken his father, they had taken his mother, they might take his sister – but he *wouldn't* give in.

So he shouted, and Griselda in fear and trembling came in out of the garden with her basket and basin and sat down in the gloaming to finish shelling her peas.

And as the shadows thickened and the stars began to shine, the malevolent singing came nearer, and presently there was a groping and stirring in the thatch, a tapping at the window, and John knew the fairies had come – not alone, not one or two or three, but in their company and bands – to plague him, and to entice away Griselda. He shut his mouth and stopped up his ears with his fingers, but when, with great staring eyes, he saw them capering like bubbles in a glass, like flames along straw, on his very doorstep, he could contain himself no longer. He caught up Griselda's bowl and flung it – peas, water and all – full in the snickering faces of the Little Folk! There came a shrill, faint twitter of laughter, a scampering of feet, and then all again was utterly still.

Griselda tried in vain to keep back her tears. She put her arms round John's neck and hid her face in his sleeve.

'Let me go!' she said, 'let me go, John, just a day and a

night, and I'll come back to you. They are angry with us. But they love me, and if I sit on the hillside under the boughs of the trees beside the pool and listen to their music just a little while, they will make the sun shine again and drive back the flocks, and we shall be as happy as ever. Look at poor Sly, John dear, he is hungrier even than I am.' John heard only the mocking laughter and the tap-tapping and the rustling and crying of the fairies, and he wouldn't let his sister go.

And it began to be marvellously dark and still in the cottage. No stars moved across the casement, no water-drops glittered in the candlehume. John could hear only one low, faint, unceasing stir and rustling all around him. So utterly dark and still it was that even Sly woke from his hungry dreams and gazed up into his mistress's face and whined.

They went to bed, but still, all night long, while John lay tossing on his mattress, the rustling never ceased. The old kitchen clock ticked on and on, but there came no hint of dawn. All was pitch-black and now all was utterly silent. There wasn't a whisper, not a creak, not a sigh of air, not a footfall of mouse, not a flutter of moth, not a settling of dust to be heard at all. Only desolate silence. And John at last could endure his fears and suspicions no longer. He got out of bed and stared from his square casement. He could see nothing. He tried to thrust it open, it would not move. He went downstairs and unbarred the door and looked out. He saw, as it were, a deep, clear, green shade, from behind which the songs of the birds rose faint as in a dream.

And then he sighed like a grampus and sat down, and knew that the fairies had beaten him. Like Jack's beanstalk, in one night had grown up a dense wall of peas. He pushed

and pulled and hacked with his axe, and kicked with his shoes, and buffeted with his blunderbuss. But it was all in vain. He sat down once more in his chair beside the hearth and covered his face with his hands. And at last Griselda, too, awoke, and came down with her candle. And she comforted her brother, and told him if he would do what she bade she would soon make all right again. And he promised her.

So with a scarf she bound tight his hands behind him, and with a rope she bound his feet together, so that he could neither run nor throw stones, peas or cheeses. She bound his eyes and ears and mouth with a napkin, so that he could neither see, hear, smell, nor cry out. And, that done, she pushed and pulled him like a great bundle, and at last rolled him out of sight into the chimney-corner against the wall. Then she took a small sharp pair of needlework scissors that her godmother had given her, and snipped and snipped, till at last there came a little hole in the thick green hedge of peas. And putting her mouth there she called softly through the little hole. And the fairies drew near the doorstep and nodded and nodded and listened.

And then and there Griselda made a bargain with them for the forgiveness of John — a lock of her golden hair, seven dishes of ewes' milk, three and thirty bunches of currants, red, white and black, a bag of thistledown, three handkerchiefs full of lambs' wool, nine jars of honey, a peppercorn of spice. All these (except the hair) John was to bring himself to their secret places as soon as he was able. Above all, the bargain between them was that Griselda would sit one full hour each evening of summer on the hillside in the shadow and greenness that slope down from the great forest towards the valley, where the fairies'

mounds are, and where their tiny brindled cattle graze.

Her brother lay blind and deaf and dumb as a log of wood. She promised everything.

And then, instead of a rustling and a creeping, there came a rending and a crashing. Instead of green shade, light of amber, then white. And as the thick hedge withered and shrank, and the merry and furious dancing sun scorched and scorched and scorched, there came, above the singing of the birds, the bleatings of sheep – and behold sooty Soll and hungry Sly met square upon the doorstep, and all John's sheep shone white as hoar-frost on his pastures, and every lamb was garlanded with pimpernel and eyebright, and the old fat ewes stood still, with saddles of moss; and their laughing riders sat and saw Griselda standing in the doorway in her beautiful yellow hair.

As for John, tied up like a sack in the chimney-corner, down came his cheese again crash upon his head, and, not being able to say anything, he said nothing.



Done For

Old Ben Bailey
He's been and done
For a small brown bunny
With his long gun

Glazed are the eyes
That stared so clear,
And no sound stirs
In that hairy ear

What was once beautiful
Now breathes not,
Bound for Ben Bailey's
Smoking pot

All But Blind

All but blind
In his chambered hole
Gropes for worms
The four-clawed Mole

All but blind
In the evening sky
The hooded Bat
Twirls softly by

All but blind
In the burning day
The Barn-Owl blunders
On her way

And blind as are
These three to me,
So, blind to Some-One
I must be

The Mocking Fairy

‘Won’t you look out of your window, Mrs Gill?’

Quoth the Fairy, nidding, nodding in the garden,
‘Can’t you look out of your window, Mrs Gill?’

Quoth the Fairy, laughing softly in the garden,
But the air was still, the cherry boughs were still,
And the ivy-tod neath the empty sill,
And never from her window looked out Mrs Gill
On the Fairy shrilly mocking in the garden.

‘What have they done with you, you poor Mrs Gill?’

Quoth the Fairy brightly glancing in the garden,
‘Where have they hidden you, you poor old Mrs Gill?’

Quoth the Fairy dancing lightly in the garden,
But night’s faint veil now wrapped the hill,
Stark ’neath the stars stood the dead-still Mill,
And out of her cold cottage never answered Mrs Gill
The Fairy mumbling, mambling in the garden. •

Jim Jay

Do diddle di do,
 Poor Jim Jay
Got stuck fast
 In Yesterday.
Squinting he was,
 On cross-legs bent,
Never heeding
 The wind was spent
Round veered the weathercock,
 The sun drew in –
And stuck was Jim
 Like a rusty pin . . .
We pulled and we pulled
 From seven till twelve,
Jim, too frightened
 To help himself.
But all in vain
 The clock struck one,
And there was Jim
 A little bit gone.
At half-past five
 You scarce could see
A glimpse of his flapping
 Handkerchee
And when came noon,
 And we climbed sky-high,
Jim was a speck
 Slip – slipping by.

Come to-morrow,
The neighbours say,
He'll be past crying for
Poor Jim Jay

Some One

Some one came knocking
At my wee, small door,
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure – sure – sure,
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a-stirring
In the still dark night,
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all



A Penny a Day

Once upon a time, there lived in a cottage that had been built out of the stones of a ruinous Castle and stood within its very walls, an old woman, and her granddaughter – whose name also was Griselda. Here they lived quite alone, being the only two left of a family of farmers who had once owned a wide track of land around them – fields, meadows, heath, and moorland – skirting the cliffs and the sea.

But all this was long ago. Now Griselda and her old grandmother had little left but the roof over their heads and a long garden whose apples and cherries and plum-trees flowered in spring under the very walls of the Castle. Many-birds nested in this quiet hollow; and the murmur of the sea on the beach beyond it was never hushed to rest.

The old woman tended the garden. And Griselda had very little time wherein to be idle. After her day's work in the farms and fields, she went so weary to bed that however much she tried to keep awake in order to enjoy the company of her own thoughts, she was usually fast asleep before the wick of her tallow candle had ceased to smoulder. Yet for reasons not known even to herself she was as happy as she was good-natured. In looks she resembled a mermaid. Her fair face was unusually gentle and solemn, which may in part have come from her love and delight in gazing at and listening to the sea.

Whenever she had time to herself, which was very seldom, she would climb up by the broken weed-grown steps to the very top of the Castle tower, and sit there – like Fatima's sister – looking out over the green cliffs and the vast flat blue of the ocean. She sat as small as a manikin there

When the sea-winds had blown themselves out she would search the beach for driftwood – the only human creature to be seen – in the thin salt spray blown in on the wind. And the sea-birds would scream around her while the slow toppling Atlantic breakers shook the earth with their thunder. In still evenings, too, when storms had been raging far out over the ocean, and only a slow ground-swell poured in its heavy waters upon the shore, it seemed that sunken bells were ringing from a belfry submerged and hidden for ever in the deeps.

But no humans, except Griselda, were there to listen. It was seldom, even, that the people in the nearest village came down to the sea-strand, and never when night was falling. For the Castle was a place forbidden. It was the haunt, it was said, of the Strange Folk. On calm summer evenings unearthly dancers had been seen dancing between the dusk and the moonlight on the short green turf at the verge of the sands, where bugloss and sea-lavender bloomed, and the gulls had their meeting place, gabbling softly together as they preened their wings in the twilight.

Griselda had often heard these tales. But, as she had lived under the walls of the Castle, and had played alone in its runs ever since she could remember anything at all, she listened to them with delight. What was there to be afraid of? She longed to see these dancers, and kept watch. And when the full moon was ablaze in the sky, she would slip out of her grandmother's cottage and dance alone in its dazzling light on the hard, sea-laid sands of the beach, or sit, half-dreaming, in some green knoll of the cliffs. She would listen to the voices of the sea among the rocks and in the caves, and could not believe that what she heard was only the lull and music of its waters.

Often, too, when sitting on her sun-warmed doorstep, morning or evening, mending her clothes, or peeling potatoes, or shelling peas, or scouring out some old copper pot, she would feel, all in an instant, that she was no longer alone. Then she would stoop her head a little lower over her needle or basin, pretending not to notice that anything was different. As you can hear the notes of an unseen bird or in the darkness can smell a flower past the finding, so it was with Griselda. She had company beyond hearing, touch, or sight.

Now and again, too, as she slid her downcast eyes to right or left, she had actually caught a fleeting glimpse of a shape, not *quite* real perhaps, but more real than nothing – though it might be half-hidden behind the bushes, or peering down at her from an ivy-shadowed hollow in the thick stone walls.

Such things did not alarm Griselda – no more than would the wind in the keyhole, or the cry of fighting swans at night. They were part of her life, just as the rarer birds and beetles and moths and butterflies are part of the Earth's life. And whatever these shadowy creatures were, she was certain they meant her no harm.

So the happy days went by, spring on to winter, though Griselda had to work nearly all her waking hours to keep herself and her old grandmother from want. Then, one day, the old woman fell ill. She had fallen on the narrow stairs as she was shuffling down in the morning, and there, at the foot of them, looking no more alive than a bundle of old clothes, Griselda found her when she came in with her driftwood.

She was old, and worn, and weary, and Griselda knew well that unless great care was taken of her, she might get

worse, and even die. The thought of this terrified her. 'Oh, Grannie, Grannie!' she kept whispering to herself as she went about her work, 'I'll do anything – anything in the world – I don't mind what happens – if only you'll promise not to die!' But she soon began to take courage again, and kept such a cheerful face that the old woman hadn't an inkling of how sick with care and foreboding Griselda's small head often was, or how near her heart came to despair.

She scarcely had time now to wash her face or comb her hair, or even to sleep and eat. She seldom sat down to a meal, and even when she did, there was but a minute or two in which to gobble it up. She was so tired she could scarcely drag her feet up the steep narrow staircase, the colour began to fade out of her cheeks, and her face to grow haggard and wan.

Still, she toiled on, still sang over her work, and simply refused to be miserable. And however sick and hungry and anxious she might feel, she never let her grandmother see that she was. The old soul lay helpless and in pain on her bed, and had troubles enough of her own. So Griselda had nobody to share hers with, and instead of their getting better they got worse.

And when – after a hot breathless night during which she had lain between waking and dreaming while the lightning flared at her window, and the thunder raved over the sea – when, next morning, she came down very early to find that the hungry mice had stolen more than half of the handful of oatmeal she had left in the cupboard, and that her little crock of milk had turned sour, her heart all but failed her. She sat down on the doorstep and she began to cry.

It was early in May, the flashing dark blue sea was

tumbling among the rocks of the beach, its surf like snow. The sun blazed in the east, and all around her the trees in their new leaves were blossoming, and the birds singing, and the air was cool and fragrant with flowers after the rain.

In a little while Griselda stopped crying – and very few tears had trickled down from her eyes – and with her chin propped on her hands, she sat staring out across the bright green grass, her eyes fixed vacantly on three butterflies that were chasing one another in the calm sweet air. This way, that way, they glided, fluttered, dipped and soared; then suddenly swooped up into the dazzling blue of the sky above the high broken wall and vanished from sight.

Griselda sighed. It was as if they had been mocking her misery. And with that sight, there was no more breath left in her body. So she had to take a much deeper breath to make up for it. After that she sighed no more – since she had suddenly become aware again that she was being watched. And this time she knew by what. Not twelve paces away, at the top of a flight of tumbledown stone steps that corkscrewed up to one of the Castle turrets, stood what seemed to be an old wizened pygmy hunched-up old man.

He was of the height of a child of five, he had pointed ears, narrow shoulders, and a hump on his back. And he wore a coat made of a patchwork of moleskins. He stood there – as stock-still as the stones themselves – his bright colourless eyes under his moleskin cap fixed on her, as if Griselda was as outlandish an object to him as he was to Griselda.

She shut her own for a moment, supposing he might have come out of her fancy, then looked again. But already, his crooked staff in his hand, this dwarf had come rapidly

shuffling along over the turf towards her. And yet again he stayed – a few paces away. Then, fixing his small bright gaze on her face, he asked her in a shrill, cracked, rusty voice why she was crying. In spite of their lightness, his eyes were piercingly sharp in his dried-up face. And Griselda, as she watched him, marvelled how any living creature could look so old.

Gnarled, wind-shorn trees – hawthorn and scrub oak – grew here and there in the moorland above the sea, and had stood there for centuries among the yellow gorse and sea-pinks. He looked older even than these. She told him she had nothing to cry about, except only that the mice had been at her oatmeal, the milk had turned sour, and she didn't know where to turn next. He asked her what she had to do, and she told him that too.

At this he crinkled up his pin-sharp eyes, as if he were thinking, and glanced back at the turret from which he had come. Then, as if he had made up his mind, he shuffled a step or two nearer and asked Griselda what wages she would pay him if he worked for her for nine days. 'For three days, and three days, and three days,' he said, 'and that's all. How much?'

Griselda all but laughed out loud at this. She told the dwarf that far from being able to pay anyone to work for her, there wasn't a farthing in the house – and not even food enough to offer him a taste of breakfast. 'Unless,' she said, 'you would care for a cold potato. There's one or two of *them* left over from supper.'

'Ay, nay, nay,' said the dwarf. 'I won't work without wages, and I can get my own food. But hark now: if you'll promise to give me a penny a day for nine days, I will work here for you from dawn to dark. Then you yourself will be

of new milk and a couple of hen's eggs to take to her grandmother, but some lardy-cakes and a jar of honey for herself. So Griselda, feeling ten times happier than she had been for many a long day, hurried off home.

Now there was a duck-pond under a willow on the way she took home, and there, remembering what the farmer had said, she paused, stooped over, and looked at herself in the muddy water. But the sky was of the brightest blue above her head, and there were so many smooth oily ripples on the surface of the water made by the ducks as they swam and preened and gossiped together that Griselda couldn't see herself clearly, or be sure from its reflexion even if her hair was still gold! She got up, laughed to herself, waved her hand to the ducks and hastened on.

When, carrying her pitcher, she had come in under the high snapdragon-tufted gateway of the Castle, and so home again, a marvel it was to see. The kitchen was as neat as a new pin. The table had been scoured, the fire-irons twinkled like silver: the crockery on the dresser looked as if it had been newly painted. a brown jar of wallflowers bloomed sweet on the sill, and even the brass pendulum of the cuckoo-clock, that hadn't ticked for years, shone round as the sun at noonday, and was swinging away as if it meant to catch up before nightfall all the time it had ever lost.

Beside the hearth, too, lay a pile of broken driftwood, a fire was merrily dancing in the grate, there was a fish cooking in the pan in the brick oven, the old iron kettle hung singing from its hook, and a great saucepan, brimful of peeled potatoes, sat in the hearth beneath it to keep it company. And not only this, for there lay on the table a dish of fresh-pulled salad - lettuces, radishes, and young

sorrel and dandelion leaves But of Old Moleskins, not a sign

Griselda herself was a good housewife, but in all her days she had never seen the kitchen look like this It was as fresh as a daisy And Griselda began to sing – to keep the kettle company Having made a custard out of one of the eggs and the milk she had brought home with her, she climbed upstairs again to see her grandmother

‘Well, Grannie,’ she said, ‘how are you now? I’ve been away and come back I haven’t wasted a moment, but you must be nearly starving’

The old woman told her she had spent the morning between dozing and dreaming and looking from her bed out of the window at the sea. This she could do because immediately opposite her window was the broken opening of what had once been a window in the walls of the Castle It was a kind of spy-hole into the world for the old woman

‘And what else were you going to tell me, Grannie?’ said Griselda

The old woman spied about her from her pillow as if she were afraid she might be overheard. Then she warned Griselda that next time she went out she must make sure to latch the door Some strange animal must have been prowling about in the house, she said She had heard it not only under her open window, but even stirring about in the room below ‘Though I must say,’ she added, ‘I had to listen pretty hard’

Griselda glanced up out of the lattice window and, since her head was a good deal higher than her grandmother’s pillow, she could see down into the green courtyard below And there stood Old Moleskins, looking up at her

An hour or two afterwards, when the sun was dipping

able to be off to the farms and the fields. But it must be a penny a day and no less; it must be paid every evening at sunset before I go to my own parts again; and the old woman up there must never see me, and shall hardly know that I have come'

Griselda sat looking at him – as softly and easily as she could, but she had never in all her days seen any human being like this before. Though his face was wizened and cockled up like a winter apple, yet it seemed as if he could never have been any different. He looked as old as the stones around him and yet no older than the snapdragons that grew in them. To meet his eyes was like peering through a rusty keyhole into a long empty room. She expected at any instant he would vanish away, or be changed into something utterly different – a flowering thistle or a heap of stones!

Long before this very morning, indeed, Griselda had often caught sight of what looked like living shapes and creatures – on the moorland or the beach – which, when she had looked again, were clean gone; or, when she had come close, proved to be only a furze-bush, or a rock jutting out of the turf, or a scangle of sheep's wool caught on a thorn. This is the way of these strangers. While then she was not in the least afraid of the dwarf, she felt uneasy and bewildered in his company.

But she continued to smile at him, and answered that though she could not promise to pay him a penny until she had a penny to pay, she would do her best to earn some. Now nothing was left. And she had already made up her mind to be off at once to a farm along the sea-cliffs, where she would be almost sure to get work. If the dwarf would wait but one day, she told him, she would ask the farmer

to pay her her wages before she came home again 'Then I *could* give you the penny,' she said

Old Moleskins continued to blink at her 'Well,' he said, 'be off then now And be back before sunset.'

But first Griselda made her grandmother a bowl of water-porridge, using up for it the last pinch of meal she had in the house. This she carried up to the old woman, with a sprig of apple blossom in a gallipot to put beside it and make it taste better Since she had so promised him, and felt sure he meant no harm, she said nothing to her grandmother about the dwarf She tidied the room, tucked in the bedclothes, gave the old woman some water to wash in, beat up her pillow, pinned a shawl over her shoulders, and, having made her as comfortable as she could manage, left her to herself, promising to be home again as soon as she could.

'And be sure, Grannie,' she said, 'whatever happens, not to stir from your bed.'

By good fortune, the farmer's wife whom she went off to see along the sea-cliffs was making butter that morning The farmer knew Griselda well, and when she had finished helping his wife and the dairymaid with the churning, he not only paid her two pennies for her pains, but a third, 'For the sake,' as he said, 'of your goldilocks, my dear, and *they're* worth a king's ransom! What say you, Sir?' he called to his son, who had just come in with the calves Simon, his face all red, and he was a good deal uglier (though pleasant in face) than his father, glanced up at Griselda, but the gold must have dazzled his eyes, for he turned away and said nothing

At this moment the farmer's wife came bustling out into the yard again She had brought Griselda not only a pitcher

behind the green hills beyond the village, and Griselda sat alone, beside the fire, her sewing in her lap, she heard shuffling footsteps on the cobbles outside, and the dwarf appeared at the window. Griselda thanked him with all her heart for what he had done for her, and took out of her grandmother's old leather purse one of the three pennies she had earned at the farm.

The dwarf eyed it greedily, then, pointing with his thumb at an old pewter pot that stood on the chimney-shelf, told Griselda to put the penny in it and to keep it safe for him until he asked for it.

'Nine days,' he said, 'I will work for you – three and three and three – and no more, for the same wages. And then you must pay me all you owe me. And I will come every evening to see it into the pot'

So Griselda tiptoed on the kitchen fender, put the penny in the pot, and shut down the lid. When she turned round again Old Moleskins was gone

Before she went to bed that night, she peeped out of the door. There was no colour left in the sky except the dark blue of night; but a slip of moon, as thin as an egg-shell, hung in the west above the hill, and would soon be following the sun beyond it. Griselda solemnly bowed to the moon seven times, and shook the old purse in her pocket

When she came down the next morning, the kitchen had been swept, a fire was dancing up the chimney, her mug and plate and spoon had been laid on the table, and a smoking bowl of milk-porridge was warming itself on the hearth. When Griselda took the porridge up to her grandmother, the old woman's eyes nearly popped out of her head, for Griselda had been but a minute gone. She took a sup of the porridge, smacked her lips, tasted it again, and

asked Griselda what she had put in it to flavour it. It was a taste she had never tasted before And Griselda told the old woman it was a secret.

That day the farmer gave Griselda some old gold-brown Cochun-China hens to pluck for market. 'They've seen better days, but will do for the pot,' he said. And having heard that her grandmother was better, he kept her working for him till late in the afternoon. So Griselda plucked and singed busily on, grieved for the old hens, but happy to think of her wages Then once more the farmer paid her her twopence, and, once more, a penny over, this time not for the sake of her bright gold hair, but for her 'glass-grey eyes' So now there was fivepence in her purse, and as yet there had been no need, beyond last night's penny for the dwarf, to spend any of them.

When Griselda came home, not only was everything in the kitchen polished up brighter than ever, but a pot of broth was simmering on the hob, which, to judge by the savour of it, contained not only carrots and onions and pot-herbs but a young rabbit Besides which, a strip of the garden had been freshly dug, three rows of brisk young cabbages had been planted, and, as Griselda guessed, two more each of broad beans and peas Whatever the dwarf had set his hand to was a job well done

Sharp to his time – the sun had but that very moment dipped beneath the hills – he came to the kitchen door for his wages Griselda smiled at him, thanked him, and took out a penny He gazed at it earnestly, then at her And he said, 'Put that in the pot, too' So now there were two pennies in his pewter pot and four pennies in Griselda's purse

And so the days went by Her grandmother grew steadily

better, and on the next Sunday – muffled up in a shawl like an old tortoiseshell cat – she sat up a little while beside her window. On most mornings Griselda had gone out to work at the farm or in the village; on one or two she had stayed in the house and sat with her grandmother to finish her sewing and mending or any other work she had found to do.

While she was in the cottage she never saw the dwarf, though he might be hidden away in the garden. But still her grandmother talked of the strange stirrings and noises she heard when Griselda was away. ‘You’d have thought,’ the old woman said, ‘there was a whole litter of young pigs in the kitchen, and the old sow, too!’

On the eighth day, the farmer not only gave Griselda her tuppence for her wages and another for the sake of ‘the dimple in her cheek’, but the third penny had a hole in it. ‘And that’s for luck,’ said the farmer. She went home rejoicing. And seeing no reason why she shouldn’t share her luck with the dwarf, she put the penny with the hole in it into the pewter pot when he came that evening. And as usual he said not a word. He merely watched Griselda’s face with his colourless eyes while she thanked him for what he had done, and then watched her put his penny into the pot. Then in an instant he was gone.

‘That maid Griselda, from the Castle yonder,’ said the farmer to his wife that night as, candlestick in hand, the two of them were going up to bed, ‘she seems to me as willing as she’s neat and pretty. And if she takes as good care of the pence as she seems to, my dear, there’s never a doubt, I warrant, but as she will take as good care of the pounds!’

And he was right. Griselda had taken such good care of

the pence that at this very moment she was sitting alone in the kitchen in the light of her solitary candle and slowly putting down on paper every penny that she had been paid and every penny that she had spent

Accounts

received		Spent	
from Farmer for wages	10	oatmeal	2
prezants	5	bones for soop	2
wages for Missus Jakes	2	shuger	2
wages for piggs	1	hair ribon	1
	—	wole	1
	18	doll	1
		money for Moalskins	8
			—
			17

The doll had been a present for the cowman's little daughter And though Griselda had made many mistakes before she got her sum right, it was right *now*, and here was the penny over in her purse to prove it.

The next evening, a little before sunset, Griselda sat waiting for the dwarf to come. Never had she felt so happy and lighthearted. It was the last of his nine days, she had all his nine pennies ready for him — one in her purse and eight in the pewter pot, the farmer had promised her as much work as she could manage, her old grandmother was nearly well again, the cupboard was no longer bare, and she was thankful beyond all words. It seemed as if her body could not possibly contain her happiness.

The trees stood in the last sunshine of evening as though they had borrowed their green coats from Paradise, the paths were weeded, the stones had a fresh coat of white-

wash, there was not a patch of soil without its plants or seedlings. From every clump of ivy on the old walls of the Castle a thrush seemed to be singing; and every one of them seemed to be singing louder than the rest.

Her sewing idle in her lap, Griselda sat on the doorstep, drinking everything in with her clear grey eyes, and at the same time she was thinking too. Not only of Moleskins and of all he had done for her, but of the farmer's son also, who had come part of the way home with her the evening before. And then she began to day-dream.

But it seemed her spirit had been but a moment gone out of her body into this far-away when the tiny sound of stone knocking on stone recalled her to herself again, and there – in the very last beam of the setting sun – stood the dwarf on the cobbles of the garden path. He told Griselda that his nine days' work for her was done, and that he had come for his wages.

Griselda beckoned him into the kitchen, and there she whispered her thanks again and again for all his help and kindness. She took her last penny out of her purse and put it on the table, then tiptoeing, reached up to the chimney-shelf and lifted down the pewter pot. Even as she did so, her heart turned cold inside her. Not the faintest jingle sounded when she shook it. It seemed light as a feather. With trembling fingers she managed at last to lift the lid and look in. 'Oh!' she whispered. 'Someone . . .' A dark cloud came over her eyes. The pot was empty.

The dwarf stood in the doorway, his eager cold bright eyes fixed on her face. 'Well,' he croaked. 'Where is my money? Why am I to be kept waiting, young woman? Answer me that!'

Griselda could only stare back at him, the empty pot in

her hand. His eyebrows began to jerk up and down as if with rage, like an orang-outang's 'So it's gone, eh? My pennies are all gone, eh? So you have cheated me! Eh? Eh? *Cheated me?*'

Nothing Griselda could say was of any avail. He refused to listen to her. The more she entreated him only to have patience and she would pay him all she owed him, the more sourly and angrily he stormed at her. And to see the tears rolling down her cheeks on either side of her small nose only worsened his rage.

'I will give you one more day,' he bawled at last. 'One! I will come back to-morrow at sunset, and every single penny must be ready for me. What I do, I can undo! What I make, I can break! Hai, hai! we shall see!' With that he stumped out into the garden and was gone.

Griselda was so miserable and her mind was in such a whirl that she could do nothing for a while but sit, cold and vacant, staring out of the open door. Where could the pennies have gone to? Mice don't eat pennies. Had she been walking in her sleep? Who could have stolen them? And how was she to earn as many more in only one day's work?

And while she sat brooding, there came a *thump, thump, thump* on the floor over her head. She sprang to her feet, lit a candle by the fire-flames, dabbed her eyes in the bucket of cold water that Old Moleskins had brought in from the well, and took up her grandmother's supper.

'Did you hear any noises in the house to-day, Grannie?' she asked cautiously as she put the bowl of broth into her skinny old hands. At this question the old woman, who was very hungry, fell into a temper. Every single evening, she told Griselda, she had warned her that some strange animal

had come rummaging into the house below when she was away working at the farm 'You never kept watch, you never even answered me,' she said. 'And now it's too late. To-day I have heard nothing.'

It was all but dark when, having made the old woman comfortable for the night, Griselda hastened down into the kitchen again. She could not bear to wait until morning. She had made up her mind what to do. Leaving her grandmother drowsy after her broth and nodding off to sleep, she stole out of the house and shut the door gently behind her. Groping her way under the ivied walls into the open she hastened on in the quiet moonlight, climbing as swiftly as she could the steep grassy slope at the cliff's edge. An owl called. From far below she could hear the tide softly gushing on the stones of the beach; and over the sea the sky was alive with stars.

A light was still glimmering at an upper window when she reached the farm. She watched it a while and the shadows moving to and fro across the blind, and at last timidly lifted the knocker and knocked on the door. The farmer himself answered her knock. A candlestick in his hand, he stood there in his shirt sleeves looking out at her over his candle, astonished to find so late a visitor standing there in the starlight, muffled up in a shawl. But he spoke kindly to her. And then and there Griselda poured out her story, though she said not a word about the dwarf.

She told the farmer that she was in great trouble, that, though she couldn't give him any reasons, she must have eight pennies by the next evening. And if only he would lend her them and trust her, she promised him faithfully she would work for just as long as he wanted her to in exchange.

'Well,' said the farmer 'That's a queer tale, *that* is! But why not work for four days, and I'll give 'ee the eightpence then ' But Griselda shook her head. She told him that this was impossible, that she could not wait, not even for one day

'See here, then,' said the farmer, smiling to himself, though not openly, for he was curious to know what use she was going to make of the money 'I can't give you any work to-morrow, nor be sure of the next day But supposing there's none for a whole week, if you promise to cut off that gold hair of yours and give me that *then*, you shall have the eight pennies now - this very moment - and no questions asked '

Griselda stood quite still in the doorway, her face pale and grave in the light of the farmer's candle It seemed that every separate hair she had was stirring upon her head. This all came, she thought, of admiring herself in the duck-pond, and not being more careful with her money, and doing what the dwarf told her to do and not what she thought best. But as it seemed that at any moment the farmer might run in and fetch a pair of shears to cut off her hair there and then, she made her promise, and he himself went back laughing to his wife, and told her what had happened. 'She turned as white as a sheet,' he said. 'And what I'd dearly like to know is what's worrying the poor dear She's as gentle as the day is long, and her word's as good as her bond Well, well! But I'll see to it. And we'll have just one lock of that hair, my dear, if only for a keep-sake '

'It looks to me,' said the farmer's wife, '*that*'ll be for our Simon to say '

When Griselda reached home again - and a sad and

solitary walk it had been through the dewy fields above the sea – she went to an old wooden coffer in which she kept her few ‘treasures’ Many of them were remembrances of her mother. And she took out a net for the hair that her mother herself had worn when she was a girl of about the same age as Griselda. Then she sat down in front of a little bare square of looking-glass, braided her hair as close as she could to her head, and drew the net tightly over it. Then she put her purse with the nine pennies in it under her pillow, said her prayers, and got into bed.

For hours she lay listening to the breakers on the shore, solemnly drumming the night away, and watched her own particular star as moment by moment it sparkled on from diamond pane to pane across her lattice window. But when at last she fell asleep, her dreams were scarcely less sorrowful than her waking.

She stayed at home the next day in case the dwarf should come early, but not until sunset did she hear the furtive clatter of his shoes as usual on the stones. She took out her purse to pay him his pennies. He asked her where they had come from. ‘And why,’ said he, ‘have you braided your hair so close and caged it up in a net? Are you frightened the birds will be after it?’

Griselda laughed at this in spite of herself. And she told him that she had promised her hair to a friend, and that she had wound it up tight to her head in order to remind herself that it was not her own any longer, and to keep it safe. At this Old Moleskins himself burst out laughing under the green-berried gooseberry bush – for Griselda had taken him out into the garden lest her grandmother should hear them talking.

‘A pretty bargain *that* was!’ he said ‘But *I* know one even

‘better!’ And he promised Griselda that if she would let him snip off but one small lock of her hair he would transport her into the grottoes of the Urchin People under the sea. ‘And *there*,’ he said, ‘if you will work for us for only one hour a day for seven days, you shall have seven times the weight of all your hair in fine solid gold. If, after that, I mean,’ and he eyed her craftily, ‘you will promise to come back and stay with us always. And then you shall have a basket of fruit from our secret orchards.’

Griselda looked at the dwarf, and then at the small green ripening gooseberries on the bush, and then stared a while in silence at the daisies on the ground. Then she told the dwarf she could not give him a lock of her hair because that was all promised. Instead, she would work for him every day for nine days, free. It was the least she could do, she thought, in return for what he had done for her.

‘Well then,’ said Moleskins, ‘if it can’t be hair it must be an eyelash. Else you will never see the grottoes. An eyelash for your journey-money!’

To this she agreed, and knelt down beside the gooseberry bush, shutting her eyes tight so that he might more easily pluck out one of the lashes that fringed their lids. She felt his stumpy earthy fingers brush across them, and nothing beside.

But when she opened them, and looked out of her body, a change had come upon the scene around her – garden, cottage, castle walls and ruined turrets, cliffs, sea and caves – all had vanished. No evening ray of sun shone here, not the faintest sea-breeze stirred the air. It was a place utterly still, and lay bathed in a half-light pale and green, rilling in from she knew not where. And around her, and above her head, faint colours shimmered in the quarried quartz of the

grottoes. And the only sound to be heard was a distant sighing, as of the tide.

There were many trees here, too, in the orchards of the Urchin People, their slim stems rooted in sands as fine and white as hoarfrost. And their branches were laden with fruits of as many colours as there are precious stones. And there was a charm of birds singing, though Griselda could see none. The very air seemed thin and fine in this dim and sea-green light: the only other sound to be heard was a faint babbling of water among the rocks, water which lost itself in the sands of the orchard.

The dwarf had brought out some little rush baskets, and told Griselda what she must do. 'Gather up the fallen fruit,' he said, 'but pick none from the branches, and sort it out each according to its kind and colour, one colour into each of the baskets. But be sure not to climb into the trees or shake them. And when your hour is finished I will come again.'

Griselda at once set to work. Though the branches overhead were thick with fruit, there were as yet not many that had fallen, and it seemed at first it would take her but a few moments to sort them out into their baskets. But the thin air and twilight of the grotto made her drowsy, and as she stooped again and yet again to pick up the fruit, her eyelids drooped so heavily that at any moment she feared she would fall asleep. And if once she fell asleep what might not happen then? Would she ever win back to earth again? Was this all nothing but a dream? She refreshed her eyes in the trickle of snow-cold water rilling down from the rocks; and now she fancied she heard a faint metallic noise as of knocking and hammering and small voices in the distance. But even when all the fallen fruits had been sorted

out into her baskets, emerald-green, orange, amethyst, crystal, and blue, her work was not done For the moment she sat down to rest, yet another of the fruits would plump down softly as an apple into deep grass upon the sand beneath it, and she had to hasten away to put it into its basket.

When the dwarf came back he looked about him to see that no fruits had been left lying in the sand He 'squinned here, he squinned there, and even turned over the fruits in the baskets to see that they had been sorted right. 'Well, Griselda,' he said at last, and it was the first time he had used her name, 'what's well done is done for good And here's the penny for your wages'

There was a stealthy gleam in his eyes as he softly fumbled with his fingers in the old moleskin pouch that hung at his side, and fetched out his penny Griselda held out her hand, and he put the penny into its palm, still watching her She looked at it - and looked again It was an old, thick, battered penny, and the king's image on it had been worn very faint It had a slightly crooked edge, too, and there was a hole in it. There could be no doubt of it - this was the penny the farmer had given her, 'for luck' Until now Griselda had not realized that she had for a moment suspected it might be Old Moleskins himself who had stolen his pennies out of the pewter pot Now she was sure of it. She continued to stare at the penny, yet said nothing After all, she was thinking to herself, the money in the pot belonged to him. He had a right to it. You cannot steal what is yours already! But then, a lie is almost as bad as stealing Perhaps he hadn't meant it to be a lie Perhaps he merely wanted to see what she might say and do That would still be a lie but not such a wicked lie Perhaps since

he wasn't *quite* human he couldn't in any case tell *quite* a lie. Perhaps it was only a dwarf lie, though his kindness to her had certainly not been only dwarf kindness! She smiled to herself at this; lifted up her face again, and seeing the dwarf still watching her, smiled at him also. And she thanked him.

At this he burst out laughing, till the roof and walls of the grotto echoed with the cackle of it, and at least half a dozen of the grotto fruits dropped from their twigs and thumped softly down into the sand. 'Aha,' he cried, 'what did I tell you? Weep no more, Griselda. That is one penny, and here are the others' He took them out of his pouch, and counted them into her hand, and the eight pennies too that she had given him but a little while before; and as he did so, he sang out in a high quavering voice like a child's:

*'Never whatever the humans say
Have the Urchin Folk worked for any man's pay.'*

Ah, Griselda,' he said, 'if we could keep you, you would scarcely ever have to work at all. No churning and weeding, no sewing and scrubbing, no cooking or polishing, sighing or sobbing; you should be for ever happy and for ever young. And you wouldn't have to scissor off a single snippet of your silk-soft hair!'

Griselda looked at him in the still green light and faintly shook her head. But she made a bargain with him none the less that every year she would work in the grottoes for the Urchin People – if he would come to fetch her – for one whole summer's day. So this was the bargain between them.

And he took out of his breeches' pocket a thick gold piece, about the size of an English crown-piece, and put it into her hand. On the one side of it the image of a mermaid was

stamped, on the other a little fruit tree growing out of a mound of sand and knobbed with tiny fruits 'That's for a keepsake,' he said. And he himself took one of each kind of the orchard fruits out of their baskets and put them into another 'And since "no pay" is *no* pay,' he went on, 'stoop, Griselda, and I'll give you your eyelash back again'

Griselda knelt down in the sand, and once more the earthy fingers brushed over her eyelids. The next instant all was dark, and a thin chill wind was stirring on her cheek. She opened her eyes to find herself alone again under the night-sky, and – as though she had been overtaken by the strangeness of a dream – kneeling on the dew-damped mould of her familiar garden under the stars. But for proof that what happened was no dream, the gold piece stamped with the images of the mermaid and the leafy tree was still clasped in her hand, and in the other was the basket of fruits.

As for the eyelash, since Griselda had never counted how many she had before Old Moleskins plucked one out, she could never tell for certain if it had been put back. But when she told Simon, the farmer's son, that there *might* be one missing – and she could tell him no more because of her promise to the dwarf – he counted them over again and again. And though he failed to make the total come to the same number twice, he assured Griselda that there couldn't possibly ever have been room for another. And Griselda gave him the green one of the grotto fruits she had brought him for a present from out of the dwarf's basket. This too was for a keepsake. 'It's as hard as a stone,' he said. 'Do we eat it, Griselda?' But hard though it was, there must have been a curious magic in it, for as they sat there together under the willow tree by the duck-pond, it was as if they had been transported not into the grottoes of the Urchin

People under the sea, but clean back into the Garden of Eden.

As for Griselda's hair, there it shone as thick as ever on her head. And as for the farmer, he refused every single penny of the eightpence.

'It's a queer thing to me, mother,' he was saying to his wife at this very moment, as they sat together on either side of the kitchen fire – just as they were accustomed to sit even in the height of summertime – 'it's a queer thing to me that this very farm of ours once belonged to that young woman's great-great-grandfather!' He took a long whiff of his pipe. 'And what *I* says is that them who once had, when they gets again, should know how to *keep*.'

'Ay, George,' said she, and she said no more



Bunches of Grapes

'Bunches of grapes,' says Timothy,
'Pomegranates pink,' says Elaine,
'A junket of cream and a cranberry tart
For me,' says Jane

'Love-in-a-mist,' says Timothy,
'Primroses pale,' says Elaine,
'A nosegay of pinks and mignonette
For me,' says Jane

'Chariots of gold,' says Timothy,
'Silvery wings,' says Elaine,
'A bumpity ride in a wagon of hay
For me,' says Jane.

I Can't Abear

I can't abear a Butcher,
I can't abide his meat,
The ugliest shop of all is his,
The ugliest in the street,
Bakers' are warm, cobblers' dark,
Chemists' burn watery lights,
But oh, the sawdust butcher's shop,
That ugliest of sights'

Cake and Sack

Old King Caraway
Supped on cake,
And a cup of sack
His thirst to slake;
Bird in arras
And hound in hall
Watched very softly
Or not at all;
Fire in the middle,
Stone all around
Changed not, heeded not,
Made no sound;
All by himself
At the Table High
He'd nibble and sip
While his dreams slipped by;
And when he had finished,
He'd nod and say,
'Cake and sack
For King Caraway!'

'Eeka, Neeka'

Eeka, Neeka, Leeka, Lee -

Here's a lock without a key,
Bring a lantern, bring a candle,
Here's a door without a handle,
Shine, shine, you old thief Moon,
Here's a door without a room,
Not a whisper, moth or mouse,
Key - lock - door - room where's the house?

Say nothing, creep away,
And live to knock another day!

Blindman's In

*'Applecumjockaby, blindfold eye!
How many rooks come sailing by,
Caw - Caw, in the deep blue sky?'*

*'Applecumjockaby, you tell me!
I can listen though I can't see,
Twenty soot-black rooks there be '*

*'Applecumjockaby, I say, No!
Who can tell what he don't know?
Blindman's in, and round we go '*

Under the Rose

(The Song of the Wanderer)

Nobody, nobody told me
What nobody, nobody knows;
But now I know where the Rainbow ends,
I know where there grows
A Tree that's called the Tree of Life,
I know where there flows
The River of All-Forgottenness,
And where the Lotus blows,
And I – I've trodden the forest, where
In flames of gold and rose,
To burn, and then arise again,
The Phoenix goes

Nobody, nobody told me
What nobody, nobody knows;
Hide thy face in a veil of light,
Put on thy silver shoes,
Thou art the Stranger I know best,
Thou art the sweetheart, who
Came from the Land between Wake and Dream,
Cold with the morning dew.



The Three Sleeping Boys of Warwickshire

In a long, low-ceiled, white-washed room on the upper floor of a red-brick building in Pleasant Street, Cheriton, ranged there in their glazed cases, is a collection of shells, conchs, seaweeds, sea-flowers, corals, fossils, goggling fish, stuffed birds – sea and land – and ‘mermaids’ Coffers, chests and anchors, and old guns, and lumps of amber and ore and quartz. All sorts of outlandish oddities, too, curiosities and junk. And there for years and years – the narrow windows, with their carved brick fruits and flowers and old leaden gutters, showering the day’s light upon their still retreat – there for years and years slumbered on in their great glass case the Three Sleeping Boys of Warwickshire. The tale of them goes a long way back. But so, too, do most tales, sad or merry, if only you will follow them up.

About the year 1600, when Queen Elizabeth was sixty-seven, and William Shakespeare was writing his play called ‘Julius Caesar’, there died, twenty-four miles from Stratford-on-Avon, a rich miller – John James Nollykins by name. His was the handsomest mill in Warwickshire. But none of his neighbours – or none at least of his poorer neighbours – could abide the sight of him. He was a morose, close-fisted, pitiless old man. He cheated his customers and had no mercy for those whom he enticed into his clutches.

As he grew older he had grown ever more mean and churlish until at last he had even begun to starve his own horses. Though he died rich, then, few of his neighbours mourned him much. And as soon as he was gone his money began to go too. His three sons gobbled up what he had

left behind him, as jackals gobble up a lion's left supper-bones. It slipped through their fingers like sand through a sieve. They drank, they dined, they gambled high and low. They danced, and capered and feasted in their finery, but they hardly knew offal from grain. Pretty soon they began to lose not only their father's trade but also all his savings. Their customers said that there was not only dust but stones in the flour; and tares too. It was fusty; it smelt mousey. What cared they? They took their terriers rather hunting, but that was for the sake of the sport and not of the flour. Everything about the Mill got shabbier and shabbier – went to rack and ruin. The sails were patched. They clacked in the wind. The rain drove in. There were blossoming weeds in the millstream and dam where should have been nothing but crystal water. And when their poorer customers complained, they were greeted with drunken jeers and mockery.

At length, three or four years after the death of the miller's last poor half-starved mare, his sons were ruined. They would have been ruined just the same if, as one foul windy night they sat drinking and singing together in the Mill-house, the youngest of them had not knocked over the smoking lamp on the table, and so burned the Mill to the ground.

The eldest – with what he could pick up – went off to Sea, and to foreign parts, and died of yellow fever in Tobago. The second son was taken in by an uncle who was a goldsmith in London. But he was so stupid and indolent that he broke more than he mended; and at last, by swallowing an exquisitely carved peach-stone from China, which had been brought back to Italy by Marco Polo, so enraged his master that he turned him off then and there. He went

East and became a fishmonger in Ratcliff Highway, with a shop like a booth, and a long board in front of it. But he neglected this trade too, and at last became a man-of-all-work (or of none) at the Globe Theatre in Southwark, where he saw Shakespeare dressed up as the ghost in 'Hamlet' and was all but killed as if by accident while taking the part of the Second Murderer in 'Macbeth'

The youngest son, named Jeremy, married the rich widow of a saddler. She was the owner of a fine gabled house in the High Street of the flourishing town of Cheriton - some eight miles from Bishops Hitchingworth. He had all the few good looks of the family, but he was sly and crafty and hard. The first thing he did after he came home from his honeymoon was to paint in a long red nose to the portrait of the saddler. The next thing he did was to drown his wife's cat in the water-butt, because he said the starveling had stolen the cheese. The third thing he did was to burn her best Sunday bonnet, then her wig - to keep it company. How she could bear to go on living with him is a mystery. Nevertheless she did.

This Jeremy had three sons. Job, John and (another) Jeremy. But he did not flourish. Far from it. The family went 'down the ladder', rung by rung, until at long last it reached the bottom. Then it began to climb up again. But Jeremy's children did best. His youngest daughter married a well-to-do knacker, and *their* only son (yet another Jeremy), though he ran away from home because he hated water-gruel and suet pudding, went into business as assistant to the chief sweep in Cheriton. And, at last, having by his craft and cunning and early rising and hard-working inherited his master's business, he bought his great-uncle's fine gabled house, and became Master Chimney-

Sweep and 'Sweep by Appointment' to the Mayor and Corporation and the Lords of three neighbouring Manors. And *he* never married at all. In spite of his hard childhood, in spite of the kindness shown him by his master, in spite of his good fortune with the three Lords of the Manor, he was a skinflint and a pick-halfpenny. He had an enormous brush over his door, a fine brass knocker, and – though considering all things, he had mighty few friends – he was the best, as well as the richest, master-sweep in those parts.

But a good deal of his money and in later years most of his praise was due to his three small orphan prentices – Tom, Dick, and Harry. In those days, hearths and fireplaces were as large as little rooms or chambers, or at any rate, as large as large cupboards or closets. They had wide warm comfortable ingle-nooks, and the chimneys were like deep wells running up to the roof, sometimes narrowing or angling off towards the top. And these chimneys were swept by hand.

Jeremy's prentices, then, had to climb up and up, from sooty brick to brick with a brush, and sweep till they were as black as blackest blackamoors, inside and out. Soot, soot, soot! Eyes, mouth, ears and nose. And now and then the bricks were scorching hot, and their hands got blistered. And now and then they were all but suffocated in the narrow juts. And once in a while were nearly wedged there, to dry like mummies in the dark. And sometimes, in the midst of the smother, a leg would slip, and down they would come tumbling like apples out of a tree or hail-stones out of a cloud in April.

And Jeremy Nollykins, after tying up all the money they brought him in fat canvas and leather bags, served them out water-gruel for supper, and water-gruel for breakfast.

For dinner on Tuesdays and Thursdays he gave them slabs of suet-pudding with lumps of suet in it like pale amber beads, what he called soup on Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays, and a bit of catsmeat (bought cheap from his second cousin) on Sundays. But then you can't climb chimneys on *no* meat. On Saturdays they had piping-hot pease-pudding and pottage because on Saturdays the Mayor's man might look in. You would hardly believe it but in spite of such poor mean living, in spite of their burns and their bruises, and the soot in their eyes and lungs and in their close lint-coloured hair, these three small boys, Tom, Dick, and Harry, managed to keep their spirits up. They even rubbed their cheeks rosy after the week's soot had been washed off under the pump on a Saturday night.

They were like Tom Dacre in the poem

*There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curled like a lamb's back was shav'd so I said
'Hush, Tom! never mind it for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair'*

*And so he was quiet, and that very night
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!
That thousands of sleepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black*

Still, they always said 'Mum' to the great ladies and 'Mistress' to the maids, and they kept their manners even when some crabbed old woman said they were owdacious, or imperent, or muscheevous. And sometimes a good-wife would give them a slice of bread pudding, or a mug of

milk, or a baked potato, or perhaps a pocket-full of cookies or a slice of white bread (which did not remain white for very long). And now and then, even a sip of elderberry wine. After all, even half-starved sparrows sometimes find tit-bits, and it's not the hungry who enjoy their victuals least.

When they *could* scuttle away too, they would bolt off between their jobs to go paddling in the river, or bird-nesting in the woods, or climbing in an old stone quarry not very far from the town. It was lovely wooded country thereabouts – near ancient Cheriton.

Whether they played truant or not, Jeremy Nollykins the Fourth – Old Noll, as his neighbours called him – used to beat them morning, noon and night. He believed in the rod. He spared nobody, neither man nor beast. Tom, Dick, and Harry pretty well hated old Noll – and that's a bad thing enough. But, on the other hand, they were far too much alive and hearty and happy when they were not being beaten, and they were much too hungry even over their water-gruel to *think* or to brood over how much they hated him: which would have been very much worse.

In sober fact – with their bright glittering eyes and round cheeks and sharp white teeth, and in spite of their skinny ribs and blistered hands, they were a merry trio. As soon as ever their teeth stopped chattering with the cold, and their bodies stopped smarting from Old Noll's sauce, and their eyes from the soot, they were laughing and talking and whistling and champing, like grasshoppers in June or starlings in September. And though they sometimes quarrelled and fought together, bit and scratched too, never having been taught to fight fair, they were very good friends. Now and again too they shinned up a farmer's fruit-trees.

to have a taste of his green apples. Now and again they played tricks on old women. But what lively little chimney-sweeps wouldn't?

They were three young ragamuffins, as wild as colts, as nimble as kids, though a good deal blacker. And, however hard he tried, Old Noll never managed to break them in. Never. And at night they slept as calm and deep as cradled babies – all three of them laid in a row up in an attic under the roof of an immense wide palliasse or mattress of straw, with a straw bolster and a couple of pieces of old sacking for blankets each.

Now Old Noll, simply perhaps because he was – both by nature as well as by long practice – a mean old curmudgeonly miser, hated to see anybody merry, or happy, or even fat. There were moments when he would have liked to skin his three prentices alive. But then he wanted to get out of them all the work he could. So he was compelled to give them *that* much to eat. He had to keep them alive – or the Mayor's man would ask Why? Still, it enraged him that he could not keep their natural spirits down, that however much he beat them they 'came up smiling'. It enraged him to know in his heart (or whatever took its place) that though – when they had nothing better to do, or were smarting from his rod in pickle – they detested him, they yet had never done him an ill-turn.

Every day he would gloat on them as they came clattering down to their water-gruel just as Giant Despur gloated on Faithful and Christian in the dungeon. And sometimes at night he would creep up to their bare draughty attic, and the stars or the moon would show him the three of them lying there fast asleep on their straw mattress, the sacking kicked off, and on their faces a faint far-away smile as if

their dreams were as peaceful as the swans in the Islands of the Blest. It enraged him. What could the little urchins be dreaming about? What made ugly little blackamoors grin even in their sleep? You can thwack a wake boy, but you can't thwack a dreamer; not at least while he is dreaming. So here Old Noll was helpless. He could only grind his teeth at the sight of them. Poor Old Noll.

He ground his teeth more than ever when he first heard the music in the night. And he might never have heard it at all if hunger hadn't made him a mighty bad sleeper himself. A few restless hours was the most he got, even in winter. And if Tom, Dick, and Harry had ever peeped in on *him* as he lay in his four-post bed, they would have seen no smile on his old sunken face, with its long nose and long chin and straggling hair – but only a sort of horrifying darkness. They might even have pitied him, stretched out there, with nightmare twisting and contorting his sharp features, and his bony fingers continually on the twitch.

Because, then, Old Noll could not sleep of nights, he would sometimes let himself out of his silent house to walk the streets. And while so walking, he would look up at his neighbours' windows, glossily dark beneath the night-sky, and he would curse them for being more comfortable than he. It was as if instead of marrow he had malice in his bones, and there is no fattening on that.

Now one night, for the first time in his life, except when he broke his leg at eighteen, Old Noll had been unable to sleep at all. It was a clear mild night with no wind, and a fine mild scrap of a moon was in the West, and the stars shone bright. There was always a sweet balmy air in Cheriton, borne in from the meadows that then stretched in within a few furlongs of the town, and so silent was the

hour you could almost hear the rippling of the river among its osiers that far away

And as Old Nollykins was sitting like a gaunt shadow all by himself on the first milestone that comes into the town – and he was too niggardly even to smoke a pipe of tobacco – a faint easy wind came drifting along the street. And then on the wind a fainter music – a music which at first scarcely seemed to be a music at all. None the less it continued on and on, and at last so rilled and trembled in the air that even Old Nollykins, who was now pretty hard of hearing, caught the strains and recognized the melody. It came steadily nearer, that music – a twangling and tootling and a horning, a breathing as of shawms, waxing merrier and merrier in the quick mild night October air

*Girls and boys, come out to play!
The moon doth shine as bright as day,
Leave your supper, and leave your sleep,
And come with your playfellows into the street!*

Girls and boys come out to play on and on and on, now faint now shrill, now in a sudden rallying burst of sound as if it came from out of the skies. Not that the moon just then was shining as bright as day. It was but barely in its first quarter. It resembled a bent bit of intensely shining copper down low among the stars or a gold basin, of which little more than the edge showed, resting 7-tilt. But little moon or none, the shapes that were now hastening along the street, running and hopping and skipping and skirring and dancing, had heard the summons, had obeyed the call. From by-lane and alley, court, porch and house-door the children of Cheriton had come pouring out like

water-streams in spring-time. Running, skipping, hopping, dancing, they kept time to the tune. Old Noll fairly gasped with astonishment as he watched them. What a dreadful tale to tell – and all the comfortable and respectable folks of Cheriton fast asleep in their beds! To think such innocents could be such wicked deceivers! To think that gluttonous and grubby errand and shop and boot-and-shoe and pot boys could look so clean and nimbly and happy and free! He shivered, partly because of his age and the night air, and part with rage.

But real enough though these young skip-by-nights appeared to be, there were three queer things about them. First, there was not the faintest sound of doors opening or shutting, or casement windows being thrust open with a squeal of the iron rod. Next, there was not the faintest rumour of footsteps even, though at least half the children of Cheriton were now bounding along the street, like autumn leaves in the wind, and all with their faces towards the East and the water-meadows. And last, though Noll could see the very eyes in their faces in the faint luminousness of starshine and a little moon, not a single one of that mad young company turned head to look at him, or showed the least sign of knowing that he was there. Clockwork images of wood or wax could not have ignored him more completely.

Old Noll, after feeling at first startled, flabbergasted, a little frightened even, was now in a fury. His few old teeth began to grind together as lustily as had the millstones of Jeremy the First when he was rich and prosperous. Nor was his rage diminished when, lo and behold, even as he turned his head, out of his own narrow porch with its three rounded steps and fluted shell of wood above it, came leap-

ng along who but his own three half-starved prentices, Tom, Dick, and Harry – now seemingly nine-year-olds as plump and comely to see as if they had been fed on the fat of the land, as if they had never never in the whole of their lives so much as tasted rod-sauce. Their mouths were opening and shutting, too, as if they were whooping calls one to the other and to their other street-mates, though no sound came from them. They snapped their fingers in the air. They came cavorting and skirling along in their naked feet to the strains of the music as if bruised elbows, scorched shins, cramped muscles and iron-bound clogs had never once pestered their young souls. Yet not a sound, not a whisper, not a footfall could the deaf old man hear – nothing but that sweet, shrill, and infuriating music.

In a few minutes the streets were empty, a thin fleece of cloud had drawn across the moon, and only one small straggler was still in sight, a grandson of the Mayor. He was last merely because he was least, and had nobody to take care of him. And Old Noll, having watched this last night-truant out of sight, staring at him with eyes like marbles beneath his bony brows, hobbled back across the street to his own house, and after pausing awhile at the nearest doorpost to gnaw his beard and think what next was to be done, climbed his three flights of shallow oak stairs until he came to the uppermost landing under the roof. There at last with infinite caution he lifted the pin of the door of the attic and peered in on what he supposed would be an empty bed. Empty! Not a bit of it! Lying there asleep, in the dim starlight of the dusty dormer window, he could see as plain as can be the motionless shapes of his three prentices, breathing on so calmly in midnight's deepest slumber that he even ventured to fetch in a tallow candle in a

pewter stick in order that he might examine them more closely.

In its smoky beams he searched the three young slumbering faces. They showed no sign that the old skinflint was stooping as close over them as a bird-snarer over his nets. There were smears of soot even on their eyelids and the fine dust of it lay thick on the flaxen lambs'-wool of their close-shorn heads. They were smiling away, gently and distantly as if they were sitting in their dreams in some wonderful orchard, supping up strawberries and cream; as though the spirits within them were untellably happy though their bodies were as fast asleep as humming-tops or honey-bees in winter.

Stair by stair Old Nollykins crept down again, blew out his candle, and sat down on his bed to think. He was a cunning old miser, which is as far away from being generous and wise as the full moon is from a farthing dip. His fingers had itched to wake his three sleeping chimney-boys with a smart taste of his rod, just to 'larn them a lesson'. He hated to think of the quiet happy smile resting upon their faces while the shadow-shapes or ghosts of them were out and away, pranking and gallivanting in the green water-meadows beyond the town. How was he to know that his dimming eyes had not deluded him? Supposing he went off to the Mayor himself in the morning and told his midnight tale, who would believe it? High and low, everybody hated him, and as like as not they would shut him up in the town jail for a madman, or burn his house about his ears supposing him to be a wizard. 'No, no, no!' he muttered to himself 'We must watch and wait, friend Jeremy, and see what we *shall* see.'

Next morning his three prentices, Tom, Dick, and Harry,

were up and about as sprightly as ever, a full hour before daybreak. You might have supposed from their shining eyes and apple cheeks that they had just come back from a long holiday on the blissful plains of paradise. Away they tumbled – merry as frogs – to work, with their brushes and bags, still munching away at their gritty oatcakes – three parts bran to one of meal.

So intent had Old Noll been on watching from his chimney-corner what he could see in their faces at breakfast, and on trying to overhear what they were whispering to each other, that he forgot to give them their usual morning dose of stick. But not a word had been uttered about the music or the dancing or the merry-making at the water-meadows. They just chattered their usual scatter-brained gibberish to one another – except when they saw that the old creature was watching them, and he was speedily convinced that whatever adventures their dream-shapes may have had in the night-hours, these had left no impression on their waking minds.

Poor Old Noll. An echo of that music and the sight he had seen kept him awake for many a night after, and his body was already shrunk by age and by his miserly habits to nothing much more substantial than a bag of animated bones. And yet all his watching was in vain. So weary and hungry for sleep did he become, that when at last the hunter's moon shone at its brightest and roundest over the roofs of Cheriton, he nodded off in his chair. He was roused a few hours afterwards by a faint glow in his room that was certainly not moonlight, for it came from out of the black dingy staircase passage. Instantly he was wide awake – but too late. For, even as he peeped through the door-crack, there fluttered past his three small prentices –

just the ghosts or the spirits or the dream-shapes of them - faring happily away. They passed him softer than a breeze through a willow tree and were out of sight down the staircase before he could stir.

The morning after the morning after that, when Tom, Dick, and Harry woke up at dawn on their mattress, there was a wonderful rare smell in the air. They sniffed it greedily as they looked at one another in the creeping light of daybreak. And sure enough, as soon as they were in their ragged jackets and had got down to their breakfast, the old woman who came to the house every morning to do an hour or two's charring for Old Nollykins, came waddling up to the kitchen table with a frying-pan of bacon frizzling in its fat

'There, me boys,' said Old Noll, rubbing his hands together with a cringing smile, 'there's a rasher of bacon for ye all, and sop in the pan to keep the cold out, after that long night-run in the moonlight.'

He creaked up his eyes at them finger on nose; but all three of them, perched up there on their wooden stools the other side of the table, only paused an instant in the first polishing up of their plates with a crust of bread to stare at him with such an innocent astonishment on their young faces that he was perfectly sure they had no notion of what he meant.

'Aha,' says he, 'do ye never dream, me boys, tucked up snug under the roof in that comfortable bed of yours? D'ye never dream? - never hear a bit of a tune calling, or maybe see what's called a nightmare? Lordee, when I was young there never went a night but had summat of a dream to it.'

'Dream!' said they, and looked at one another with their mouths half open. 'Why, if you ax me, Master,' says Tom,

'I dreamed last night it was all bright moonshine, and me sitting at supper with the gentry'

'And I,' says Dick, 'I dreamed I was dancing under trees and bushes all covered over with flowers And I could hear 'em playing on harps and whistles'

'And me,' says Harry, 'I dreamed I was by a river, and a leddy came out by a green place near the water and took hold of my hand I suppose, Master, it must have been my mammie, though I never seed her as I knows on.'

At all this the cringing smile on Old Nollykins' face set like grease in a dish, because of the rage in his mind underneath And he leaped up from where he sat beside the skinny little fire in the immense kitchen hearth. "'Gentry"'! "Harps"! "Mammie"! he shouted 'You brazen, ungrateful, greedy little deevils Be off with ye, -or ye shall have such a taste of the stick as will put ye to sleep for good and all'

And almost before they had time to snatch up their bags and their besoms, he had chased them out of the house So there in the little alley beside the garden, sheltering as close to its wall as they could from the cold rain that was falling, they must needs stand chattering together like drenched jackdaws, waiting for the angry old man to come out and to send them about the business of the day

But Old Nollykins' dish of bacon fat had not been altogether wasted He knew now that the young rascalions only *dreamed* their nocturnal adventures, and were not in the least aware that they themselves in actual shadow-shape went off by night to the trysting-place of all Cherriton's children to dance and feast and find delight But he continued to keep watch, and would again and again spy in on his three prentices lying asleep together on their

mattress up in the attic, in the hope of catching them in the act of stealing out. But although at times he discerned the same gentle smile upon their faces, shuning none the less serenely for the white gutter-marks of tears on their sooty cheeks, for weeks together he failed to catch any repetition of the strains of the strange music or the faintest whisper of their dream-shapes coming and going on the wooden stairs

Nevertheless, the more he brooded on what he had seen, the more he hated the three urchins, and the more bitterly he resented their merry ways. The one thing he could not decide in his mind was whether when next, if ever, he caught them at their midnight tricks, he should at once set about their slumbering bodies with his stick or should wait until their dream-wraiths were safely away and then try to prevent them from coming back. Then indeed they might be at his mercy



Now there was an old crone in Cheriton who was reputed to be a witch. She lived in a stone hovel at the far end of a crooked alley that ran beside the very walls of Old Nollykins' fine gabled house. And Old Nollykins, almost worn to a shadow, knocked one dark evening at her door. She might have been the old man's grandmother as she sat there, hunched up in her corner beside the great iron pot simmering over the fire. He mumbled out his story about his three 'thieving, godless little brats', and then sat haggling over the price he should pay for her counsel. And even then he hoped to cheat her. At last he put his crown in her shrunken paw.

Waken a sleeper, she told him, before his dream-shape

can get back into his mortal frame, it's as like as not to be sudden death. But keep the wandering dream-shape out *without* rousing his sleeping body, then he may for ever more be your slave, and will never grow any older. And what may keep a human's-dream-shape out – or animal's either – she said, is a love-knot of iron the wrong way up or a rusty horseshoe upside down, or a twisted wreath of elder and ash fastened up with an iron nail over the keyhole – and every window shut. Brick walls and stone and wood are nothing to such wanderers. But they can't abide iron. And what she said was partly true and partly false, and it was in part false because the foolish old man had refused to pay the crone her full price.

He knew well, and so did she, that there was only a wooden latch to his door, because he had been too much of a skinflint to pay for one of the new iron locks to be fixed on. He had no fear of thieves because he had so hidden his money that no thief on earth would be able to find it, not if he searched for a week. So he asked the old woman again, to make doubly sure, how long a natural human creature would live and work if his dream-shape never came back. 'Why, that,' she chiepered, leering up at him out of her wizened old face, 'that depends how young they be, what's the blood, and what's the heart. Take 'em in the first bloom,' she said, 'and so they keeps.' She had long ago seen what the old man was after, and had no more love for him than for his three noisy whooping chimney-sweeps.

Very unwillingly he dropped another piece of money into her skinny palm and went back to his house, not knowing that the old woman, to avenge herself on his skinflint ways, had told him only half the story. That evening his three prentices had a rare game of hide-and-seek together

in the many-roomed old rat-holed house; for their master had gone out. The moment they heard his shuffling footsteps in the porch they scampered off to bed, and were to all appearance fast asleep before he could look in on them.

He had brought back with him a bundle of switches of elder and ash, a tenpenny nail, a great key, and a cracked horseshoe. And, strange to say, the iron key which he had bought from a dealer in broken metal had once been the key of the Mill of rich old Jeremy the First at Stratford-on-Avon! He pondered half that night on what the old woman had said, and 'surely', said he to himself, 'their blood's fresh enough, my old stick keeps them out of mischief, and what is better for a green young body than a long day's work and not too much to eat, and an airy lodging for the night?' The cunning old creature supposed indeed, that if only by this sorcery and hugger-mugger he could keep their wandering dream-shapes from their bodies for good and all, his three young prentices would never age, never weary, but stay lusty and nimble perhaps for a century. Ay, he would use them as long as he wanted them, and sell them before he died. *He'd* teach them to play truant at night, when honest folk were snoring in their beds. For the first time for weeks his mingy supper off a crust and a ham-bone and a mug of water had tasted like manna come down from the skies.

The very next day chanced to be St Nicholas's Day. And those were the times of old English winters. Already a fine scattering of snow was on the ground, like tiny white lumps of sago, and the rivers and ponds were frozen hard as iron. Better still, there was all but a fine full moon that night, and the puddles in Cheriton High Street shone like Chinese crystal in the beams slanting down on them from between the eaves of the houses.

For five long hours of dark, after his seven o'clock supper, Old Nollykins managed to keep himself awake. Then, a little before midnight, having assured himself that his three prentices were sound asleep in their bed, he groped downstairs again, gently lifted the latch and looked out. There was never such a shining scene before. The snow on the roofs and gables and carved stonework of the houses gleamed white and smooth as the finest millers' meal. There was not a soul, not even a cat, to be seen in the long stretch of the lampless street. And the stars in the grey-blue sky gleamed like dewdrops on a thorn.

Sure enough, as soon as ever the last stroke of midnight had sounded from St Andrew's tower, there came faintly wreathing its way out of the distance the same shrill penetrating strains of the ancient tune. Lord bless me, if Old Nollykins had had but one sole drop of the blood of his own youth left in his veins he could not have resisted dancing his old bones out of his body down his steps and into the crudded High Street at the sound of it.

*Girls and boys, come out to play!
The moon doth shine as bright as day,
Leave your supper, and leave your sleep,
And come with your playfellows into the street!*

But, instead, he shuffled like a rat hastily back into the house again, pushed himself in close under the staircase, and waited – leaving the door ajar.

Ho, ho, what's that? Faint flitting lights were now showing in the street, and a sound as of little unhuman cries, and in a minute or two the music loudened so that an old glass case on a table nearby containing the model of a brig which had belonged to Old Nollykins's wicked great uncle who

had died in Tobago, fairly rang to the marvellous stirrings on the air. And down helter-skelter from their bed, just as they had slipped in under its sacking – in their breeches and rags of day-shirts, bare-foot, came whiffing from stair to stair the ghosts of his three small prentices. Old Nollykins hardly had time enough to see the wonderful smile on them, to catch the gleam of the grinning white teeth shining beneath their parted lips, before they were out and away.

Shivering all over, as if with the palsy, the old man hastened up the staircase, and in a minute or two the vacant house resounded with the strokes of his hammer as he drove in the tenpenny nail into the keyhole above the attic door, and hung up key and horseshoe by their strings. This done, he lowered his hammer and listened. Not the faintest whisper, sigh or squeak came from within. But in dread of what he might see he dared not open the door.

Instead, curiosity overcame him. Wrapping a cloak round his skinny shoulders he hurried out into the street. Sure enough, here, there, everywhere in the snow and hoar-frost were footprints – traces at any rate distinct enough for *his* envious eyes, though they were hardly more than those of the skirring of a hungry bird's wing on the surface of the snow. And fondly supposing in his simplicity that he had now safely cheated his prentices, that for ever more their poor young empty bodies would be at his beck and call, Old Noll determined to follow away out of the town and into the water-meadows the dream-shapes of the children now all of them out of sight. On and on he went till his breath was whistling in his lungs and he could scarcely drag one foot after the other.

And he came at last to where, in a loop of the Itchen, its

waters shining like glass in the moon, there was a circle of pollard and stunted willows. And there, in the lush and frosty grasses was a wonderful company assembled, and unearthly music ascending, it seemed, from out of the bowels of a mound nearby, called Caesar's Camp. And he heard a multitude of voices and singing from within. And all about the meadow wandered in joy the sleep-shapes not only of the children from Cheriton, but from the farms and cottages and gipsy camps for miles around. Sheep were there too, their yellow eyes gleaming in the moon as he trod past them. But none paid any heed to the children or to the 'strangers' who had called them out of their dreams.

Strange indeed were these strangers of middle height, with garments like spider-web, their straight hair of the colour of straw falling gently on either side their narrow cheeks, so that it looked at first glimpse as if they were grey-beards. And as they trod on their narrow feet, the frozen grasses scarcely stirring beneath them, they turned their faces from side to side, looking at the children. And then a fairness that knows no change showed in their features, and their eyes were of a faint flame like that of sea-water on nights of thunder when the tide gently lays its incoming ripples on some wide flat sandy strand of the sea.

And at sight of them Old Nollykins began to be mortally afraid. Not a sign was there of Tom, Dick, or Harry. They must have gone into the sonorous mound – maybe were feasting there, if dream-shapes feast. The twangling and trumpeting and incessant music made his head spin round. He peered about for a hiding-place, and at length made his way to one of the old gnarled willows beside the icy stream. There he might have remained safe and sound till morning, if the frost, as he dragged himself up a little way

into the lower branches of the tree, had not risen into his nostrils and made him sneeze. There indeed he might have remained safe and sound if he had *merely* sneezed, for an old man's sneeze is not much unlike an old sheep's wheezy winter cough. But such was this poor old man's alarm and terror at the company he had stumbled into that he cried, 'God bless us!' after his sneeze – just as his mother had taught him to do.

That was the end of wicked old Nollykins; as it was his first step on the long road of repentance. For the next thing he remembered was opening his eyes in the half-light of stealing dawn and finding himself perched up in the boughs of a leafless willow-tree, a thin mist swathing the low-lying water-meadows, the sheep gently browsing in the grasses, leaving green marks in the frosty grass as they munched onwards. And such an ache and ague was in Old Noll's bones as he had never, since he was swaddled, felt before. It was as if every frosty switch of every un-poll'd willow in that gaunt fairy circle by the Itchen had been belabouring him of its own free will the whole night long. His heart and courage were gone. Sighing and groaning, he lowered himself into the meadow, and by the help of a fallen branch for staff made his way at last back into the town.

It was early yet even for the milkmaids, though cocks were crowing from their frosty perches, and the red of the coming sun inflamed the eastern skies. He groped into his house and shut the door. With many rests on the way from stair to stair he hoisted himself up, though every movement seemed to wrench him joint from joint, until at last he reached the attic door. He pressed his long ear against the panel and listened a moment. Not a sound. Then stealthily

pushing it open inch by inch, he thrust forward his shuddering head and looked in.

The ruddy light in the East was steadily increasing, and had even pierced through the grimy panes of the dormer window as though to light up the slumbers of his small chimney-sweeps. It was a Sunday morning and their fair skins and lamb's-wool heads showed no trace of the week's soot. But while at other times on spying in at them it looked to Old Nollykins as if their smiling faces were made of wax, now they might be of alabaster. For each one of the three — Tom, Dick, and Harry — was lying on his back, their chapped, soot-roughened hands with the torn and broken nails resting on either side of their bodies. No smile now touched their features, but only a solemn quietude as of images eternally at rest. And such was the aspect of the three children that even Old Nollykins dared not attempt to waken them because he knew in his heart that no earthly rod would ever now bestir them out of this sound slumber. Not at least until their spirits had won home again. And the soured old crone was not likely to aid him in that.

He cursed the old woman, battering on her crazy door, but she paid him no heed. And at last, when the Cheriton Church bells began ringing the people to morning service, there was nothing for it, if there was any hope of saving his neck, but to go off to the Mayor's man, dragging himself along the street on a couple of sticks, to tell him that his prentices were dead.

Dead they were not, however. The Mayor's man fetched a doctor, and the doctor, after putting a sort of wooden trumpet to their chests, asseverated that there was a stirring under the cage of their ribs. They were fallen into a trance, he said. What is called a *catalepsy*. It was a dreamlike

seizure that would presently pass away But though the old midwife the doctor called in heated up salt, for salt-bags, and hour by hour put a hot brick fresh from the fire to each prentice's stone-cold feet, by not a flutter of an eyelid nor the faintest of sighs did any one of the three prove that he was alive or could heed

There they lay, on their straw pallet, motionless as mummies, still and serene, lovely as any mother might wish, with their solemn Sunday-morning soap-polished cheeks and noses and foreheads and chins, and as irresponsible as cherubs made of stone

And the Mayor of the Town, after listening to all Old Nollykins could say, fined him Five Bags of Guineas for allowing his three prentices to fall into a catalepsy for want of decent food and nourishment And what with the pain of his joints and the anguish of having strangers tramping all over his house, and of pleading with the Mayor, and of seeing his money fetched out from its hiding-places and counted out on the table, the miserable old man was so much dazed and confused that he never thought to take down the wreath of ash and elder and the horseshoe and the key. That is why, when a week or two had gone by and no sign had shown how long this trance would continue, the Mayor and Councillors decided that as Tom, Dick, and Harry could be of no further use to the town as chimney-sweeps, they might perhaps earn an honest penny for it as the 'Marvels of the Age'.

So the Mayor's man with a flowing white muslin band round his black hat, and his two mutes – carrying bouquets of lilies in their hands – came with his handcart and fetched the three bodies away. A roomy glass case had been made for them of solid Warwickshire oak, with a fine chased

lock and key And by the time the Waits had begun to sing their Christmas carols in the snow, the three children had been installed in this case on the upper floor of the Cheriton Museum, and there lay slumbering on and on, quiet as Snow-White in the dwarf's coffin, the gentle daylight falling fairly on their quiet faces – though during the long summer days a dark blind was customarily drawn over the glass whenever the sun shone in too fiercely at the window

*

News of this wonder spread fast, and by the following Spring visitors from all over the world – even from cities as remote as Guanojuato and Seringapatam – came flocking into Warwickshire merely to gaze awhile at the sleeping Chimney-Sweeps at 6d a time After which a fair proportion of them went on to Stratford to view the church where lie William Shakespeare's honoured bones Indeed Mrs Giles, the old woman who set up an apple and ginger-bread stall beside the Museum, in a few years made so much money out of her wares that she was able to bring up her nine orphaned grandchildren all but in comfort, and to retire at last at the age of sixty to a four-roomed cottage not a hundred yards from that of Anne Hathaway herself

In course of time the Lord-Lieutenant and the Sheriffs and the Justices of the Peace and the Bishop and the mayors of the neighbouring towns, jealous no doubt of this fame and miracle in their midst, did their utmost to persuade and compel the Mayor and Corporation of Cheriton to remove the Boys to the county-town – the Earl himself promising to lodge them in an old house not a stone's-throw distant from the lovely shrine of his ancestors, Beauchamp Chapel But all in vain. The people of Cheriton held tight to their

rights: and the Lord Chief Justice after soberly hearing both sides at full length wagged his wigged head in their favour.

For fifty-three years the Sleeping Boys slept on. During this period the Town Council had received One Hundred and Twenty-Three Thousand, Five Hundred and Fifty-Five sixpences in fees alone (i.e. £3,088 17s 6d.). And nearly every penny of this vast sum was almost clear profit. They spent it wisely too – widened their narrow chimneys, planted lime-trees in the High Street and ash and willow beside the river, built a fountain and a large stone dove-cot, and set apart a wooded meadowland with every comfort wild creatures can hope to have bestowed on them by their taskmaster, Man.

Then, one fine day, the curator – the caretaker – of the Museum, who for forty years had never once missed dusting the prentices' glass case first thing in the morning, fell ill and had to take to his bed. And his niece, a pretty young thing, nimble and high-spirited, came as his deputy for a while, looked after the Museum, sold the tickets, and kept an eye on the visitors in his stead. She was only seventeen, and was the very first person who had ever been heard to sing in the Museum – though of course it was only singing with her lips all but closed, and never during show-hours.

And it was Summer-time, or rather the very first of May. And as each morning she opened the great door of the Museum and ascended the wide carved staircase and drew up the blinds of the tall windows on the upper floor, and then turned – as she always turned – to gaze at the Three Sleepers (and not even a brass farthing to pay), she would utter a deep sigh as if out of the midst of a happy dream.

'You lovely things!' she would whisper to herself. 'You lovely, lovely things!' She had a motherly heart, and the

wisps of her hair were as transparent as the E-string of a fiddle in the morning light And the glance of her blue eyes rested on the glass case with such compassion and tenderness that if mere looking could have awakened the children they would have been dancing an Irish jig with her every blessed morning

Being young, too, she was inclined to be careless, and had even at times broken off a tiny horn of coral, or a half-hidden scale from the mermaid's tail for a souvenir of Cheriton to any young stranger that particularly took her fancy Moreover, she had never been told anything about the magicry of keys or horseshoes or iron or ash or elder, having been brought up at a School where wizardry and witchcraft were never so much as mentioned during school hours. How could she realize then that the little key of the glass case and the great key of the Museum door (which, after opening both, she had dropped out of her pocket by accident plump into the garden well) could keep anybody or anything out, or in, even when the doors were wide open? Or that water can wash even witchcraft away?

That very morning there had been such a pomp of sunshine in the sky, and the thrushes were singing so shrilly in the new-leaved lime trees as she came along to her work, that she could resist her pity and yearning no longer Having drawn up the blinds on the upper floor, in the silence she gently raised the three glass lids of the great glass case and propped them back fully open. And one by one – after first listening at their lips as stealthily as if in hope of hearing what their small talk might be in their dreams – she kissed the slumbering creatures on their stone-cold mouths And as she kissed Harry she fancied she heard a step upon the stair And she ran out at once to see

No one Instead, as she stood on the wide staircase listening, her young face tilted and intent, there came a waft up it as of spiced breezes from the open spaces of Damascus Not a sound, no more than a breath, faint and yet almost unendurably sweet of Spring – straight across from the bird-haunted, sheep-grazed meadows skirting the winding river: the perfume of a whisper. It was as if a distant memory had taken presence and swept in delight across her eyes. Then stillness again, broken by the sounding as of a voice smaller than the horn of a gnat. And then a terrible sharp crash of glass And out pell-mell came rushing our three young friends, the chimney-sweeps, their dream-shapes home at last

★

Now Old Nollykins by this time had long been laid in his grave So even if anyone had been able to catch them, Tom, Dick, and Harry would have swept no more chimneys for him. Nor could even the new Mayor manage it Nor the complete Town Council. Nor the Town Crier, though he cried twice a day to the end of the year ‘O-yess! O-yess!! O-yess!!! Lost, stolen, or strayed Three World-Famous and Notorious Sleeping Boys of Warwickshire’ Nor even the Lord-Lieutenant Nor even the mighty Earl

As for the mound by the pollard willows – well, what clever Wide-awake would ever be able to give any news of that!



At the Keyhole

Grill me some bones,' said the Cobbler,
 'Some bones, my pretty Sue,
I'm tired of my lonesome with heels and soles,
Springsides and uppers too,
A mouse in the wainscot is nibbling,
A wind in the keyhole drōnes,
And a sheet webbed over my candle, Susie, -
 Grill me some bones !'

'Grill me some bones,' said the Cobbler,
 'I sat at my tic-tac-to,
And a footstep came to my door and stopped, -
And a hand groped to and fro,
And I peered up over my boot and last,
And my feet went cold as stones -
I saw an eye at the keyhole, Susie ! -
 Grill me some bones !'

The Huntsmen

Three jolly gentlemen,
In coats of red,
Rode their horses
Up to bed.

Three jolly gentlemen
Snored till morn,
Their horses champng
The golden corn.

Three jolly gentlemen,
At break of day,
Came clitter-clatter down the stairs
And galloped away

Then

Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty,
A hundred years ago,
All through the night with lantern bright
The Watch trudged to and fro.
And little boys tucked snug abed
Would wake from dreams to hear –
'Two o' the morning by the clock,
And the stars a-shining clear !'
Or, when across the chimney-tops
Screamed shrill a North-East gale,
A faint and shaken voice would shout,
'Three ! – and a storm of hail !'

Kings

King Canute

Sat down by the sea,
Up washed the tide
And away went he

Good King Alfred

Cried, 'My sakes !
Not five winks,
And look at those cakes !'

Lackland John

Were a right royal Tartar
Till he made his mark
Upon *Magna Carta*

Ink, seal, table,

On Runnymede green,
Anno Domini

12 - 15

The Fly

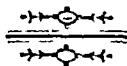
How large unto the tiny fly
Must little things appear! —
A rosebud like a feather bed,
Its prickle like a spear;

A dewdrop like a looking-glass,
A hair like golden wire,
The smallest grain of mustard-seed
As fierce as coals of fire,

A loaf of bread, a lofty hill;
A wasp, a cruel leopard,
And specks of salt as bright to see
As lambkins to a shepherd.

The Ship of Rio

There was a ship of Rio
Sailed out into the blue,
And nine and ninety monkeys
Were all her jovial crew
From bo'sun to the cabin boy,
From quarter to caboose,
There weren't a stitch of calico
To brecch 'em – tight or loose,
From spar to deck, from deck to keel,
From barnacle to shroud,
There weren't one pair of reach-me-downs
To all that jabbering crowd
But wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When roared the deep-sea gales,
To see them reef her fore and aft,
A-swinging by their tails!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When glassy calm did come,
To see them squatting tailor-wise
Around a keg of rum!
Oh, wasn't it a gladsome sight,
When in she sailed to land,
To see them all a-scampering skip
For nuts across the sand!



The Old Lion

There was once a sailor of the name of John Bumps. He had bright blue eyes and wore gold rings in his ears. Although, when this story begins, Mr Bumps was still quite young, he had three children – Topsy, Emanuel, and Kate – who lived with their mother in a nice little house with square windows in Portsmouth, and he had often been round the world. He had sailed into most of its ports in all kinds of weather; and there was scarcely an island of great beauty or marvel that he couldn't tick off on his tarry fingers.

Now one day, a little the right side of the rainy season, he came again to the west coast of Africa. His ship, *The Old Lion* – and he was her second-mate – had been sailing south down that great coast, past the Canaries and the Green Islands, past the Ivory and the Gold and the Slave Coasts to Banana and the noble Congo, and not long after that Mr Bumps went ashore. He was paddled up the river Quanza, dark and green, past Dondo, to visit an old friend. And there in a village of the black men, for two green-and-red bead necklaces and a jack-knife, he bought a monkey.

Mr Bumps had now and then bought other monkeys, and he knew this was a high price for one in that part of the country. But his friend, the Chief of the Mlango-Nlango tribe, who was exceedingly fat, and wore two blankets besides his beads and ivories, assured Mr Bumps that this was no ordinary monkey.

The Chief's round black face, with its two rows of flashing teeth, broke into an immense smile as he told Mr Bumps this. 'Ee no skittle-skattle monk-ee, no,' he said, for he had often traded with the English 'Ee . . ,' but instead of

finishing the sentence, he shut his eyes and put one black hand on the top of his head, though what exactly he meant Mr Bumps could not tell. At first glimpse of the monkey, however, Mr Bumps had known at once that whatever pleasant things the Chief might say of it they would be true. Besides, the Chief was an old friend of his, and wouldn't tell him lies.

On the other hand, since the hairy little fellow stood an inch or so under the common stature of monkeys of its kind, it was of no great size, and there was nothing else remarkable that showed – not then. As Mr Bumps held it on his arm, in its long-skirted crimson coat, which one of the Chief's wives had made out of the royal cloth, it sat far less heavy indeed than would his younger daughter, Kate. And she herself was very small for her age.

But it had a neat, pretty head, wonderfully slender hands and long thumbs, and as it turned its solemn hazel eyes on Mr Bumps, he suddenly felt acutely homesick. He had been more than once more than half round the world without feeling *that* 'It's no good longing,' he would say, 'when you've got to wait.'

And then something which Mr Bumps had not expected at all happened. It was this. His eyes, as has been said already, were of a particularly bright blue, and as the blue of his blue eyes met the gazing hazel of the monkey's, the creature stirred on his arm, opened its mouth, and made a remark. Mr Bumps had never paid much attention to foreign tongues, and he did not understand what it said. Nevertheless, he knew what it *meant*. He knew for certain that the tiny liquid syllables which had issued from the small mouth were a message from friend to friend.

He bade a cheerful good-bye to the Chief, kissed his hand

to the black lady who had brought the monkey into his hut, and went off again down to the river. He took aboard *The Old Lion* a good store of nuts, bananas, and other fruit, and as that evening he looked back at the coast, shining in the last of the sun – and *The Old Lion* was now some miles out to sea – he turned to his monkey and said, ‘How do you like the sound of the name of Jasper, sonny?’

The monkey softly turned to him as if to answer, but this time said nothing.

So Jasper he was called, although this was really due to a mistake on the part of Mr Bumps. What had come into his mind, as he stood at the taffrail looking back at the coast of Africa, were the first two lines of a hymn that had been a favourite of his mother’s –

*From Greenland’s icy mountains
To India’s coral strand*

But in saying the words over to himself he had got the last but one word wrong. He had said,

*From Greenland’s icy mountains
To India’s jasper strand.*

Still, Jasper, he thought, was a better name than Coral, and Jasper it remained.

There never was a monkey so quick to learn, so grave in the learning, and so quiet and pleasant in manner as Jasper. Mr Bumps could only guess how old he was, and he guessed, ‘p’raps five’ And since the famous little son of John Evelyn even before this age could all but talk in Greck, Latin, and Hebrew, it may not be so marvellous as it sounds that Jasper soon began to pick up a few words of English.

Long before this, however, he had learned to sit at table and say his grace (in his own tongue), to use a knife and fork, and a mug for his drink, to bow when spoken to, to swing his own hammock, and little things like that.

He would creep up, too, to watch the man at the wheel or the cook at his cooking in the galley or caboose. He would gaze for minutes at a time at the compass and lamp in the binnacle, and would salute the captain whenever he saw him on the bridge. He knew the Christian names of every man jack of the crew, and where each of them slept in the fo'c'sle, he could manage a little rope-splicing, and knew the difference between a granny and a reef knot, a loop and a fisherman's bend. In spite of his red cossack gown, he could scamper up the rigging to the truck or very summit of the mainmast twice as quick as any cabin-boy – and like every cabin-boy he had no tail to help.

Besides all this Mr Bumps taught Jasper much else. Not that he sat him down and *made* him learn. It amused him, and Jasper enjoyed it. It was a long voyage too, *The Old Lion* edged into the Doldrums, and there was plenty of time.

As the days and weeks drew by, Jasper became as much at home on *The Old Lion* with his friend Mr Bumps as if he had been born to the sea. Merely because he was jump and hairy, had a small flat-nosed face, and showed his teeth when he talked, the sailors at first would tease and laugh at him, treating him only as a pet or a plaything. As soon as he began to talk King's English, however, they teased him no more. He began to say things they remembered.

What Mr Bumps meant to do with him when he was safe home in his little house in Portsmouth he hardly knew. He was sure his wife, whose name was Emma, would be

pleased to see his new friend, and there was no doubt at all about Topsy, Emmanuel, and Kate. But how could he ever part with Jasper now? Yet how expect him to lead a sea-life? There was, however, no need to decide anything for the present; and meanwhile he took almost as fond a care of him – sought him out dainties, physicked him when sick – as Mrs Bumps was taking of their little Kate.

At last, and Mr Bumps had long since made up his mind that he could never of his own wish be separated from Jasper, *The Old Lion* drew into the English Channel. She was nearly home. And one misty afternoon in November she sailed slowly up the Thames and dropped anchor in the Pool of London. It was bitter cold, but still; and a haze of the colour of copper hung over the mighty city. And there in the midst, like an enormous leaden beehive against the sullen sky, rose the dome of St Paul's.

Mr Bumps stepped ashore early next morning, with the monkey hooded upon his arm, some presents for his wife and children in his bag, and set out briskly for his railway station. He had not been in old England for many months, and the first thing in his mind was to get down to Portsmouth as soon as he possibly could. But the haze that had been high over the city the day before had now descended into its streets, and Mr Bumps had to grope on in the direction of the Monument and Pudding Lane through a fog which grew steadily denser.

He knew, at last, that he had lost his bearings. And when presently he came to a little public house, *The Three Swans*, its windows dimly glowing in the fog, he decided to go in and ask his way. But, somehow or other, he didn't like the notion that Jasper should go in too. He glanced into the little face under its hood, and saw how cold and doleful it

looked But he was afraid the thick tobacco smoke, and the smell of the beer and spirits in *The Three Swans* might make him ill.

So, 'Sit you here a moment, Jasper,' he said, as he put him down beside his bag beside the lamp-post, 'and don't 'ee stir till I come back'

But, alas, Mr Bumps stayed many minutes longer than he had intended to in *The Three Swans*, and when he came back, though his bag was still there where he had left it, Jasper was gone

Indeed, Jasper had been patiently waiting in the fog in the dim light of the lamp-post for no more than five of those minutes, when there came by a stranger, with a black hat on his head, a black beard, and a coat reaching almost to his heels If the monkey had not stirred at that moment, all might have been well But, at sound of these footsteps in the strange cold London street, the solitary creature had lifted his face and put out a hand, for he had made many friends on board ship And the stranger stooped, and looked at him

Now, by a chance – whether evil or not it is hard to say – this man with the dark beard was a dealer in all kinds of animals He had a shop in a narrow alley not far from the river That shop went back, and every now and then up two or three steps, at least thirty paces And from end to end of it there were cages of all kinds of birds and small beasts, besides tanks of fish and of rare snakes and lizards, and even gauze-covered cages of butterflies on rows of shelves His larger animals he kept, though out of the rain, in a stone-flagged yard

He stooped down, his rusty black coat brushing the paving-stones, and in the foggy gloom looked long into

Jasper's face. Then he took the little, narrow hand in his, and gently shook it.

'How d'ye do' he said, in a wheedling voice, and speaking through his nose. 'Very pleased to meet you, I'm sure'

And Jasper, with his usual gentle manners, and thinking no harm of him, looked up into his face and chattered a few sounds, which were uncommonly like sea-English.

The stranger shot one swift, thief-like glance over his shoulder, then, opening a button of his great-coat, gingerly lifted Jasper from where he sat, slipped him in under it, and strode rapidly away.

Before evening, Jasper found himself, with a few monkey nuts and a can of water, squatting alone in a cage, surrounded by other cages in which, beside barking dogs and scrambling puppies, were scores of white rabbits and rats and cats – Manx, tabby, and Siamese – squirrels, ferrets, stoats, tortoises, owls, love-birds, canaries, parrots, parakeets, and macaws, and in the midst of a din and screaming of voices more deafening by far than he had ever heard in his own West African forests, or in the middle of a storm at sea. He sat shivering and trembling in his gown, and at last pushed his head in under its furry hood, muttering to himself in small, mournful, monkey accents, 'Mr Bumps. Mr Bumps Oh, Mr Bumps!'

But Mr Bumps, having in great grief given up his friend for lost, was long since in the train and on his way in spite of the fog to his little square-windowed house in Portsmouth, and back to his Emma, his Topsy, Emmanuel, and Kate.

Jasper did not stay long in Mr Moss's animal shop – only for nine days and nine nights. But at the end of them he had already begun to pine and droop, could scarcely eat and

seldom opened his eyes. He missed his friend the sailor, and his care and kindness, though whenever Mr Moss himself, or the sharp-nosed, sallow-faced young man that helped in the shop, looked in at his cage, and spoke to him, he looked solemnly back, without showing either his teeth or his temper. He never clutched at his food when it was pushed in through the wire door, nor did he even attempt to make any sound in response to what they said to him. He sat there, his hands folded under his gown, like some small hairy king deprived of his kingdom. Mr Moss and his young man had never seen his like before, and even in this short time, they had both discovered that they could not face out the little creature's dwelling eyes.

But though Jasper sat for the most part so quiet and motionless in his cage that he might seem, at first sight, to be fast asleep, or even stuffed, all day long his ears and wits (and now and then his eyes) were busy. He would watch the Belgian canary birds which Mr Moss, during their moulting, had fed on special seed and cayenne pepper to brighten their feathers, for hours at a time. There was an enormous python, too, coiled up in straw not far away, and for a long time he hardly dared to look at it. But at last he made himself watch that too, and he never ceased to listen to the talk between Mr Moss and his pale, soft-footed assistant, and the strange human beings that came into the shop. Strange talk in the shop too he heard between his fellow-captives.

Mr Moss himself, though if Jasper had been like other ordinary monkeys he would have soon forgotten it, never felt *wholly* at ease at the thought that he had stolen this one. Odd, unlucky things began to happen in the shop. He himself upset a glass case full of Death's Head Moths. It

frightened him – their tiny feet on his skin and the fanning of their sepulchral wings. The python one night, having managed to glide out of her tank, devoured a mandarin duck at one gulp, and escaped into London. And when his assistant, first thing in the morning, tripped over a broom that had been left on the floor of the shop and broke his left leg, his master began to think that it would be as well to get rid of Jasper as soon as he could.

So when that afternoon an acquaintance of his, who had once been a showman and trainer of animals for a circus, stepped into his shop and enquired how much he wanted for Jasper, the price he asked him was so very moderate that his friend paid it down at once, and carried the monkey off with him, there and then. At first sight of Jasper he too had become homesick – for the ring-lights and the tan and the tinsel and the ambling horses – and had determined to begin again

‘And what do you call him?’ he asked Mr Moss.

‘Call him? Why, what he calls himself, day in, day out, and even in his sleep! – Jasper.’

‘Ah, now, “Jasper”?’ repeated his friend.

He too was a dark man, but hollow-cheeked and lean, and he wore his hair long over his ears. His name was Mr J. Smith, but he changed this on the programmes and play-bills, when he was showing his animals, to Signor Dolcetto Antonio. Unlike one or two black-hearted miscreants who followed his trade, he believed in kindness and common-sense. ‘There are five things,’ he would say to his wife, ‘all things breathing – buffaloes to bullfinches – *need*; like you and me, Amy. food, shelter, sleep, company, and freedom.’ And he gave his animals nearly as much as they could wish of them all except the last

Away from the cold and noise and stench and darkness of Mr Moss's shop, Jasper soon began to be himself again. His appetite returned, his eye brightened, he looked sleek and nubile. He was soon as well as could be expected – his bosom friend Mr Bumps gone, and himself so far from his own land.

In order to take all possible care of his charge, Signor Antonio brought him home to where he lived with his wife – the upper parts of a house in Jay Street, Soho. Part of this house was a shop that sold wine and oil and coffee and macaroni and olives and sausages and other kind of foreign meats and drinks. In the rest, first floor to roof, lived Mr and Mrs Smith. Here, beside the fire in their small parlour, they made Jasper as cosy as they could – in a little chamber to himself.

For two hours every morning, Signor Antonio would talk to Jasper, and teach him tricks. When he was gone out to do his business, Mrs Smith, busy herself over her cooking and housework, would talk to him too. She was a very stout woman, even stouter than the Chief of the Mlango-Nlangoes. And, like the Chief, she was full of good humour, and had a kind heart. She took particular pleasure in children and animals, and at the Zoo would not only cheep to the birds and stroke the gazelles, but nod and smile at the orang-outangs and hippopotami. She treated Jasper as if he were a long-lost son.

Her husband had soon discovered that Jasper was a monkey that had no equal. He was as different from other monkeys as day is from dusk. He learnt everything he was taught with ease and alacrity and could soon chatter away to his friend, almost as if he had known English all his life. If he *looked* five, he could certainly *talk* like two-and-a-half.

But, though he was so teachable and sweet-tempered and serious in his manners, there was something about him that never ceased to perplex Mr Smith.

He felt this in particular when, his lessons done, Jasper would sit quietly in his chair, waiting for his midday meal. He had an air, at such times, as if he were brooding on something of which Mr Smith had not the least notion. He seemed to be so far away that even Mr Smith never ventured to ask him what he was thinking about, or to summon him back to dark Soho.

Merely to look at, Jasper was a comfort to the eye. Mr Smith, though he was a good-natured man, was as awkward and clumsy as a saucepan with too long a handle to it. He was all angles. Mrs Smith, too, who was even more good-natured than her husband, sat and talked with no more grace than a feather bed. But Jasper, even in the least motion of his small body, turn of the head, of the hand, of the foot, was quiet as flowing water and delicate as the flowers beside it. When he touched, it was as if thistledown had settled at his finger-tips. When he stretched out his fingers to take an apple, it was like the movement of a shadow through the air. He would sidle along Mrs Smith's curtain-rod without stirring a single ring, and if she were near, would be allowed to follow her out on to the roof where she sometimes sat – in spite of smoke and smuts – sewing a hem and looking over London. Jasper would balance himself in his gown on the edge of the tallest of the red chimney-pots, glancing north, south, east, and west, and not a finger-tip to keep his balance!

If he was this to look at, what can he then have *been* in his secret mind – with its memories and dreams and sedate ponderings, river and forest, the terrors and dangers and

delights of vast dark Africa, or rather of his own particular dark green corner of it?

★

‘What I feel about our friend over there,’ Mr Smith said to his wife one day, when Jasper sat asleep in his chair, ‘what I feel is, that he could learn me a sight more than I can learn him – of what, I mean, *matters*, my love He’s that privy yet polite you don’t know where you are And what I feel too is that there’s something little short of shameful in letting a mere mob of humans come paying their half-crowns and shillings and sixpences just to stare at him He talks to us, but, bless you, he only talks to us about what he knows we can understand He don’t tell us his secrets Never The truth is, he ought not to have been took away from where he came from, though where *that* was, nobody knows No Moss ever got such a mystery by rights Never He’s had a queer past, has that little monk, mark *me*’

And Mrs Smith, though in her heart she agreed with her husband, thought it would be unwise to say so

‘Don’t you fret, Jim,’ she replied ‘He has plenty to eat and keep him busy Worry! Not he! Look at him there, sleeping as peaceful as a babby, as if there wasn’t a coconut or a black man in the world. He’s as happy as the day is long’

‘Coconuts!’ said her husband, but he was not convinced

At last, one early morning, a happy thought came into Mrs Smith’s mind

‘What by and by would be really fair and square, Jim,’ she said as she was combing her hair by the glass, ‘what by and by would be nice and proper, would be for you to take half of what you make out of Jasper, and him take the other

half. Once he began to earn a bit of money, we could teach him what money *means*. After all, Jim, it's only a sort of short cut for bread and cheese and tables and chairs and clothes and houses – not to mention the time and trouble taken in making them, and he would soon pick it up. Then, mebbe, he might like to get a few little things for himself. He might like to set up, with some cash in the bank, as an independent gentleman. Judging from what I've seen of the world, he has twice as much sense as most such, and not a shadow of any vices; and I don't see *anything* against it'

Mr Smith looked at his wife in astonishment. Nor was it merely because she had been speaking with her mouth full of hairpins. It was because she would seem for days together not to agree with a single word he said, and then, of a sudden, like a knife from its sheath, out would come a notion that made everything plain and easy. So it was with what she had said about Jasper.

About nine months after he had brought him home, Mr Smith became perfectly certain that there was nothing else he could teach his charge. Jasper could make a speech, could sing; and draw pictures of forests and ships with a box of coloured chalks. He could scribble down simple sums up to fractions on a blackboard, and find an answer. He could manage everything to the last nicety with his clothes. During the week he was dressed in scarlet breeches and a green coat, with ivory buttons. On Sundays he wore a lightly-starched ruff round his neck, a velvet gown to his heels, made out of an old Sunday dolman of Mrs Smith's, and fine shoes. For out-of-doors he had two or three different kinds of cloak. Not that Mr Smith *kept* him to human clothes, or human ways either. Jasper agreed he must grow

used to them. Whenever he so fancied he went bare, and, if he wished, he kept two Sunday-clothes days in one week. But this was very seldom.

He knew many simple rhymes, and Mr Smith had made a little harp for him – rough, of course, but tunable. To this he would sing these rhymes, and other airs, and a curious music also, whose meaning he kept to himself. More than once, indeed, Mr Smith had been awakened early in the morning to hear Jasper playing on his harp in the next room. And *then*, while both the words and tune seemed to be of Jasper's own making or remembering, there sounded a cadence in them that almost made him weep. By good fortune Mrs Smith slept far heavier of nights than he did.

Anyhow, there was no doubt at all, that if Signor Antonio and Dr Jasper – as they were going to call themselves in the play-bills – were ever to get rich, now was the time to begin. Mr Smith had long ago been to see the Manager of the Bank in which he kept his savings, and had arranged with him to open an account in Dr Jasper's name. Into this each week he afterwards paid Jasper's share of their takings which mounted up by leaps and bounds.

'You see,' he had first explained to the Manager, 'it may be some time before my young friend is able to come and pay his money in himself. But I want everything open and aboveboard. When he makes his debboo, which will be shortly, he will take half the fees and I shall take half. And when we have made what he thinks is enough, then he shall choose as he thinks best.'

The Manager, Mr Johnson, who until then had seen only a few photographs of Dr Jasper, not very good likenesses either, smiled at this arrangement. But there was no doubt

that it *was* all open and aboveboard, and he fell in with Mr Smith's wishes.

It was in the month of December that Dr Jasper made his first appearance on the stage. This was in London. There was sleet that Christmas, and a cold wind was blowing in the lamplit London streets, when Signor Antonio and Mrs Smith set off together in a four-wheeled cab bound for the *Fortune*, a famous theatre which had been named after the old *Fortune* in the days of Queen Bess, and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. 'And not much more than twenty years after it was built,' Mr Smith told Jasper, 'it was burned down to the very ground – in two hours'

'In two hours!' said Jasper.

Still, Mrs Smith, as she reclined quietly but firmly against the purple velvet of the cab, her back to the horse and her face to Jasper, and her husband beside her to keep out the draught, might herself have been one of those merry wives come to life again!

In the bleak cold north wind, the tiny snowflakes vanishing as they fell through the dark air, and with its multitude of people going off about their pleasure in their furs and wraps and winter clothes, London looked as bright as a peep-show.

Jasper trembled a little, and not from cold, as he gazed out of the glass cab-window at the passers-by, while Mr and Mrs Smith talked cheerfully to keep his spirits up, and sometimes made wonderfully good fun together about some over-dressed lady or gentleman they could admire from their little inside gloom in the cab without themselves being seen. For *their* hearts too were beating high. But Jasper himself, in his warm dark corner, said nothing. The crowd of humans and the brightly-lit windows of the

shops, reflected in his round dark eyes, the noise and cold, alarmed and frightened him. He longed to be home again; or far, far away from this strange land. The cab trundled along down the Charing Cross Road and into Trafalgar Square. Mr Smith had told the cabman to take this way round to the theatre because he wanted Jasper to see the lions.

'And look, Jasper,' said Mrs Smith, when her husband had pointed them out, '*that* there up there is the great Lord Nelson, and mighty sharp-set he must be in his cocked hat – and only one eye and one arm, pore feller – with all that sleet falling up among them stars.'

Jasper lifted his quiet face and could but faintly detect the great silent granite figure aloft against the sky.

'Sea,' he muttered. 'Seaman.' But, strangely enough, Mrs Smith, who was usually quickness itself at following what he said, supposed he meant to spell the word *see* and not *sea*, and was afraid he must be very nervous indeed of what lay in front of him if he had gone back to his old childish way of speaking – *See Man* when he had first learnt English. But Jasper had other thoughts.

The cab rolled on along the Strand, and there was still enough melting sleet in the street almost to silence its iron-tyred wheels. On and on it went, past the great railway-station in its cobbled yard, and on towards Waterloo Bridge, and in a little while drew up in a back street where an iron lamp jutting out over the pavement lit up the 'Stage Door'.

Mr Smith then got out of the cab. He paid the fare, and (as much for his own good luck as for the cabman's) gave him a half-crown over. And he asked him to be waiting for them at eleven. 'Eleven sharp,' he said.

Then, having handed out Mrs Smith, he mounted the three steps, pushed open the door, which clapped to after them with a bang that shook poor Jasper to the heart, and they all three entered the theatre.

'Good evening, Sam,' said Mr Smith to the stout man sitting in a box behind a little open window by the door.

'Good evening,' he replied; but his watery grey eyes were fixed not on Mr Smith but on Jasper. With a turn of his small head and a touch of his fingers, he had shown his friend that he wished to be put down. So, one after the other – Mr Smith, Jasper, Mrs Smith – the three of them ascended the flight of stone steps into the dressing-room that had been set apart for them by the Manager of the theatre. And here Mr Smith helped Jasper to spell out the description of himself that had been printed in large capital letters on the play-bill, a copy of which was pinned to the wall. THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE LEARNED AND FAMOUS DR JASPER, he read out slowly, Jasper sagely nodding his head at every word, THAT MINUTE MARVEL OF MONKEYLAND, AND MASTER MIMIC OF MAN!

'There,' said Mrs Smith, 'that's *you*, Jasper! What do you think of that?' But Jasper made no answer. At this moment, trembling a little, he was gazing at the picture of himself underneath the print. It had taken him straight home again – since the artist, though no doubt he had done his best, had made him look very much like a small gorilla!

When with deft fat hands Mrs Smith had put the finishing touches to his toilet, and her husband was ready, they all three went down the stone steps again and made their way to the wings of the stage. There, in shadow and in silence, they waited. Soon it would be Jasper's turn. In this nook of the painted scenery – all flowers and trees and

butterflies – the framework of which went up into the blaze of lights above, Jasper peered about him. It was the night after Christmas, and the theatre, from the floor up to its very roof, was packed with human beings of all ages, but particularly human children

By standing on tiptoe and peering through a tiny hole in the canvas Jasper could see row above row of strange faces mounting higher and higher, their eyes fixed on the five *Exceptionally Elegant Ethiopian Elephants Engaged at Enormous Expense* which were now seated around their trainer on the stage. At sight of all these faces a sigh shook him from head to foot. And he turned away his head – and peered out to see the elephants themselves

Four of these mighty animals, garlanded with mistletoe, were caparisoned in bright green and silver. The fifth, and the smallest, was dressed up as a clown, his face white-washed, and one eye surrounded with a diamond in red. They sat on their tubs. They wreathed their proboscises. They greeted their trainer in a chorus that drowned even the blare of the band. They walked on their hind legs, they passed the bottle, they turned the handle of their hurdy-gurdies, and the two senior elephants danced a cumbrous polka, while the two junior sat fanning themselves, and the youngest with a painted poker beat time.

Then, one by one, these sage and monstrous beasts, their tiny eyes alight with excitement, stumpy tails a-swing, trailed off the stage to their own quarters. The curtain descended. It was Jasper's turn.

And soon all was made ready for him. A table, with books upon it, an empty inkstand, some foolscap and a dinner bell, two gilt chairs covered in bright blue satin beside it, and a sofa – this was the only furniture, apart from an

umbrella stand, a palm in a pot, and a red and green Axminster rug.

The music stopped. The curtain slowly rose again. And there, in the middle of the stage, was Signor Antonio, dressed up like a lackey in a black tail-coat, and as if engaged in putting the room in order in preparation for the coming home of his master. And while he tidied the books and gave a last flick of his feather-brush over the fleckless satin chairs and the palm in the pot, he kept talking to himself, though loud enough for everybody to hear. He was explaining who he was – the faithful servant of the great Dr Themistocles Marmoset Jasper, the kindest and wisest master manservant ever had, and the most famous medico in Europe. – ‘In Europe, did I say?’ he cried to himself, slapping his leg with his brush. ‘Nay, in the WORLD!’

‘Now, Jasper,’ whispered Mrs Smith, stooping over her small friend’s head. ‘World, Jasper: that’s your word, that’s your cue! On you go, and bless you, Jasper! And if, poor mite,’ she breathed to herself, ‘you’re half as nervous of the business as I am, in spite of my size, well. . . . Now, Jasper!’

Jasper looked up at her; he let go her hand. Out of the shadows he went, and into the light.

In his striped trousers, french-grey waistcoat, long black morning-coat, with his gold watch chain and starched collar, high hat in hand, he minced gently forward. His patent-leather shoes were a little too long for him, but he managed them with ease.

At sight of his master, Jennings at once stepped forward. Dr Jasper gave him his hat, his cane, and his canary-coloured gloves. ‘Thank you, sir. Very good, sir,’ said Jennings. He hung the hat on a peg, and stood the cane in the stand.

The Doctor lifted his head a little as he came to the low

table, and reaching up, laid his hand upon a book. 'It's a fine ssunny morning, Jennings,' he said. 'Who iss my firsst pay-sshent to-day?'

So dead a silence hung in the theatre at first sound of these small treble words and their soft-hissed esses one could not only have heard a pin drop, but could have declared whether it had fallen on its head or its point! Then a little girl, in a seat high up in the dress circle, began to whumper a little. But she was soon hushed, and Jennings was explaining to his master that his first patient was the Right Honourable the Countess of Crumpet, 'and a very nice lady too, sir, as I have been told, closely related to Lord Muffin, sir, of Teacake Castle'

Thereupon his master drew his watch from his pocket, and said 'It iss five minut'ss after ten, Jennings, I fear her lady-sship iss late'

'I will see, sir,' said Jennings, 'she may be in the ante-room' And he retired.

'It's all right, Ma, it's all right,' he whispered to Mrs Smith, as, swift and quiet as a shadow, he went whisking by 'Don't worry He's *safe*'

Meanwhile, and while he was gone, Jasper, having taken a chair at the gilded table, drew the long goose-quill pen from out of the dry inkpot, and bending his small head till his flat nose almost touched the paper, pretended to write on it.

'That will be three guine'ss,' he sighed to himself almost like a miser as he scrawled with the pen. 'Three more guine'ss!' But though he said these words *as if* to himself, they were loud enough, like Mr Smuth's, for every body in the theatre to hear, and yet they were said so solemnly that nobody laughed.

At this moment Signor Antonio came on to the stage again, from behind the wings. But while he had been gone he had dressed himself up in a bonnet, a flounced purple skirt and bustle, with a long train, and he carried a green striped parasol. He was now of course the Countess of Crumpet. Dr Jasper bowed to the Countess, and they both sat down. And Dr Jasper said to the Countess, 'It iss a fine morning. Would your ladysship, pleess, kindly put out the tongue?'

Then he stood up on his chair to look at her tongue, and said, 'Ah! excussing me, your lady-sship, a ssorry tongue, a dreadful tongue.' And still nobody laughed. But when the Countess, with a simper, thrust out a great man's hand in a white cotton glove from under her Paisley shawl for Dr Jasper to feel her pulse – then *everybody* laughed; and after that – except when Dr Jasper was all alone on the stage – they hardly stopped to take breath.

And so the play went on, Jasper saying his part as if it were as simple and easy a thing to do as it is for other apes and monkeys to crack nuts and skin bananas. But though he seemed to all who watched from high and low in the theatre to be as the Manager had said he was – the Master Mimic of Man – this was not really true. This was only the human way of looking at him.

All the time he was really and truly himself, and only himself – thinking his own thoughts, gazing out of his bright, darting, round, dark-deepened, and now almost amber-coloured eyes over the glare of the footlights at the people beyond, and at Signor Antonio in his shawl and gloves and bonnet and bustle. And though he smiled as he chattered, and even grinned with laughter when owing to a mistake made on purpose the Countess sat down on the

floor instead of on her chair, he looked gravity itself underneath, if one could have seen him close

It was cold to him in London – this wintry weather, and though he liked Mr and Mrs Smith, who had been very kind to him, and though he knew quite well in his own way of thinking what *a pot of money* meant, he had *not* liked the large, fat, black-moustached face of the Manager of the theatre, and had consented to shake hands with him only out of politeness. He took everything in good part. And yet, he pined still for a long-lost friend, and to return again to his own people.

And when the curtain fell at the end of his performance his face shrunk up as if into a mask, and his eyes suddenly shut, at sound of the roar of voices that had broken out beyond it. Up went the curtain again – himself and Signor Antonio in the middle of the stage and yet again and yet again – Dr Jasper alone now, and again and again, now hand in hand with the Manager on one side of him and Mr Smith on the other. It seemed as if the audience would shout themselves to a whisper and clap their hands off!

When at last the curtain came down and stayed down, he walked off a little dizzily and unsteadily, and clutched at Mrs Smith's skirt. 'Bless me, you poor poor mite!' was all she could say to him, for there were tears in her eyes, part of rejoicing and part for pity, and she fondled his cold fingers as if he had been a child. But small though he was, even as monkeys of his kind go, he had been a gigantic success, and the Manager's face was one wide, dark, greasy smile when once more he shook hands with him, bowed to the ground, though it was not much more than in mockery, and said good-night.

So the money – Jasper's share – poured into the bank-

until he was by far the richest monkey in the world, even though he was also the only monkey in the world that knew it. Mr and Mrs Smith in all their dealings with him were as honest as the day, and they of course were soon rich too.



Now one day John Bumps came home again from sailing round the world, as he had sailed many times before, though never without pleasure. And even though he lived so far away from London as Portsmouth is, he had not been two days with his family before in large print in his newspaper he saw the name of Dr Jasper, and read of what he had done.

'Jasper,' he repeated to himself, 'why that's queer, now, *that is Jasper!*' He read it again, and slapped his leg. 'The same name, right enough,' he said to himself. 'And, Solomon Davy, surely there can't be two Jaspers, not like this! And if there are *not* two Jaspers, then this Jasper must be my Jasper!'

And there and then, he'd made up his mind, for he still had a good deal of money in his pocket after his voyage, that he would take Mrs Bumps and Topsy and Emmanuel and Kate right up to London so that they could go to the *Fortune*, and see this Jasper with their own eyes. Even if he were not his old friend of the Mlango-Nlangoes and only a coincidence, it would be a Treat. And Mr Bumps always gave his family a Treat when he came home from sea. He said nothing whatever to the children meanwhile about his friend Jasper in case it should prove a disappointment, though he told Mrs Bumps. The following Saturday morning, having locked up the house, they all set out together in their best clothes, and caught an early train.

Emmanuel and Kate had never been to London before. They sat, each of them in a corner, staring out of the carriage window so intently at the fields and meadows and villages and churches and hills and farms gliding by that they both of them had only just finished the buns Mrs Bumps had bought for them to eat on the journey when the train steamed into the great glass-roofed cavern of a station called Waterloo – after (as Mr Bumps explained) the great Duke of Wellington, the Iron Duke, Old Nosey.

They had the whole day before them, and Mr Bumps, when he gave them a Treat, never wasted a minute. He at once led them all off into an omnibus and they went, first to Westminster Abbey, then to see the soldiers on their horses in Whitehall, then to St Paul's Cathedral. And there Mr Bumps showed them through the brass grating where the body of Lord Nelson reposed in his tomb made of the cannon he had captured from the French. 'He was a great sailor, was Lord Nelson,' said Mr Bumps.

'Do you mean a sailor just like you, Daddy?' piped out Topsy.

'Ssh! Topsy!' whispered Mrs Bumps. 'You mustn't call out like that. It's a church.'

In St Paul's churchyard, on a seat in the open – for the sun was shining, though it was rather cold – they ate the lunch which Mrs Bumps had packed into her wicker basket. Then, after seeing where the two little Princes had slept for the last time in the Tower of London, they had tea in a tea-shop. The three children had a boiled egg each, but Mr and Mrs Bumps preferred theirs poached. After that they had some Bath buns and plenty of cake. Then they all went out again, and after letting them look for a little while into the shop windows in Cheapside, and especially

a toy-shop bowered in with a great plane tree like an immense umbrella, Mr Bumps – as if he had suddenly made up his mind – packed them all into a hackney cab and off they went to the *Fortune*.

Though Mr Bumps was now first-mate of *The Old Lion*, he was not yet a rich man, so he could not afford to take tickets for the seats downstairs, except in what is called the Pit. And he did not take tickets for the Pit because Mrs Bumps said she always liked to look down when she went to a theatre. They were extremely early and by good luck there were five seats available in the Upper Circle, and these in the very middle of the front row. Very pleased they were to be able to sit quietly in these stuffed easy seats and to rest and watch the people, after walking about such a long time in London. Indeed, they had hardly settled themselves in, when little Kate, who was only five and tired out, fell fast asleep in her chair.

Topsy and Emmanuel however stayed wide awake, sucking their peardrops (because Mrs Bumps had thought the seats too dear for bull's-eyes), and whispering and chattering and watching everything that went on. They had never in all their lives seen so many fine ladies with bare shoulders, and diamonds in their hair, or so many gentlemen in long black coats and tall collars

One by one the members of the band, some carrying their instruments, came edging their way to their seats in front of the stage, and began to tune up or softly tootle on their oboes and trombones. The drummer too thumped softly on his drums, but not on his triangle or cymbals. And last came the conductor with his ivory wand.

'What's that for?' chirped Emmanuel.

'That,' said Mrs Bumps, 'is to do the music with.'

The conductor sat down on his little velvet seat and waited

Mr Bumps took out his silver watch. 'Sharp on the hour,' he whispered to Mrs Bumps, 'I wonder what they are waiting for'

He had no need to wonder long For suddenly at a signal the conductor with white-gloved hand lifted his wand, and to a crash of music that nearly startled poor little Kate out of her wits, everybody in the theatre stood up and the band played the National Anthem. Sure enough, in a moment or two there came into a great box beside the stage which had been trimmed up with holly and mistletoe, first the King of England himself, then the Queen, then their son, the Prince of Wales, and then a little foreign princess with black ringlets and a tiny fan. They were followed by a few nice-looking but splendid ladies and gentlemen, and the King stood in front of the box, in the middle of it, while the anthem went on.

'That's the King,' whispered Mr Bumps to Emmanuel

'And that's the Queen,' said Mrs Bumps 'And there, see, Topsy, see, Manny, see, Kitty, that's the Prince of Wales!'

It was a long time before little Kate could see at all, she had been so dead asleep When the last note had been played, they all five cheered as loud as they could, and so did the other people in the theatre The King bowed. They cheered again Then he sat down, and slowly, quietly, in heavy folds, the curtain ascended and the performance began

First came acrobats, in tights and spangles Next came a juggler and his small daughter It looked as if the balls and hoops and dinner-plates they juggled with were things alive After the juggling there came a man who sang 'The

Bay of Biscay', though Mr Bumps knew a good deal more about the Bay than he did. And after him the five silent-footed Ethiopian Elephants debouched one after the other on to the stage.

At sight of them, though the three children opened their mouths like O's and clapped till it hurt, Mr Bumps himself could scarcely breathe. But not, of course, because he had never seen elephants before. Far from that. He had seen quantities of elephants – either walking about, wild and tranquil, in the black man's swamps in Africa, or lying caked with mud in the heat of the tropic sun, or fountaining one another with cascades of silvery water at the close of day. And even though these Five did clever tricks, he had watched others at far more useful ones in their own country. Not that he despised the elephants, he was only used to them

No; Mr Bumps was waiting for Dr Jasper and could scarcely endure the delay. He was waiting for Dr Jasper in his 'Grand New Act' – as the play-bills said, an act 'especially invented for the August Amusement of Royalty; and patronized by the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of Abyssinia, and other all-powerful Potentates'. And he knew now that before he could count fifty it would begin

The huge ponderous beasts, having bowed, kneeling in their green and silver, to express their thanks for the applause, were shuffling off towards the back of the stage. There, as the lights dimmed, they stood in a row, their trunks uplifted above their heads. There came a pause; and then a slender shaft of pearly light struck down from on high towards the wings. A sudden shawm-like trumpeting broke out from the elephants' throats, a trumpeting loud enough to drown the strains of twenty orchestras.

And into the beam of light – it moving with him as he went – there came tripping softly forward – a trailing cloak of crimson velvet edged with gold lace upon his shoulders, a tall cap of sable surmounted by a plume of *aracatan* feathers pinned with a diamond in front of it upon his head, a little silver-gilt sceptre in his right hand – Jasper No longer now a medico of fashion, prescribing pills for the Countess of Crumpet, but himself *Almighty Emperor of All the Ethiopians*, the All-Excellent Ammanabi Nana Dah

Following in his train came two small fuzz-wigged pygmy blackamoors in ostrich feathers and in robes of silk – of yellow and vermillion. One of these was carrying the Emperor's royal sunshade, and the other (for it was very light in weight) his gilded throne. And these were followed by Signor Antonio (Mr Smith), no longer either a manservant or a countess, but one of the Emperor's tallest and lankiest wives!

When the trumpeting of the elephants had died down and the cymbals and drums had ceased to sound, there went up such a roar of voices in the theatre from the people in it that it was heard outside for half a mile in all directions. Even the King of England, seated smiling in his Royal Box, could not remember to have been greeted with a louder *Huzza*. And then, almost as if this prodigious noise itself had caused it, an utter quiet fell. The Emperor, having gathered his crimson skirts around him, his scarlet sunshade like a huge mushroom over his head, had taken his seat upon his throne. The royal twelve-whiskered leopard-skins had been laid about his feet.

He sat there a moment – small, upright – perfectly still, and looked on them all. Not a tongue wagged, not a sigh or a cough sounded in all the theatre. The *only* stir, and no

one noticed it, was that little Kate, who had never before seen such things or anything like them, ducked down her head out of sight of the stage and hid her face in her mother's lap.

The Emperor Jasper looked around him. He was accustomed now to the glare and the sea of faces, and the plaudits and the laughter. He knew where he was, and he knew too – though he himself alone could tell it – *who* and *what* he was. And perhaps for this reason, as he sat there peering out of his splendour, the host of those who were looking at him felt a peculiar coldness stealing into their blood.

It was not only as if they were uneasy in his presence – the tiny motionless head, the intent eyes – but also as if they were frightened. Even the Queen, in her disquiet, glanced sidelong at the King, but the King was looking at the Emperor. And the Emperor at this moment, having very gently lifted his minute left hand, had opened his lips to speak. . . .

Perhaps if Mr Bumps had thought all this over for a moment or two he would have remained quietly seated with his family in the front row of the Upper Circle and would have said nothing. He would have waited till the end of the performance, and then found his way round to the Stage Door, and sent in to the Manager his card – his visiting card – which he had had printed when he was made first-mate of *The Old Lion*: *Mr John Bumps, First-Mate of THE OLD LION, 7 The Transoms, Portsmouth*. That would have been the right thing to do. But Mr Bumps, being a seaman and not used to holding himself back when anything that needed doing was to be done, couldn't wait to think.

Out loud, the only sound in the theatre, except that the

Emperor having opened his lips had said, 'we', he called 'Jasper' ' And as if on one hinge every face in the theatre and every face even in the Royal Box, had turned round to look at him. Moreover the puny Emperor on the stage in his gold and crimson finery had said not a syllable after that first clear 'We' – which he had pronounced as if it were spelt Oo-ee – but had looked at him too All else then but rapture had vanished out of his mind And, in the twinkling of an eye, without the least haste, or word, or sound, or nod, he had risen from his throne, and was softly pattering towards the footlights, or rather to the side of the footlights opposite the Royal Box.

Now the stage was framed in, top and sides, with a shimmering arch of carved wood and painted plaster All kinds of knobbly fruits and flowers and little cupids and ribbons and dolphins and birds adorned it, glistening bright with gilt and colours It was behind this arch that the curtain rolled down, and the *Fortune* was one of the handsomest theatres in London

In all that quiet, then, slowly and without haste, Jasper began to climb this arch, his royal robes swinging free behind him. They were heavy with their gold lace, and he climbed slowly But he climbed none the less surely, on and on, and up and up, and watched by every eye, until he had reached to where Mr Bumps's gallery began Here there ran a low wooden wall to keep the people from falling out of the gallery Those in the front row of this gallery sat in their seats with their knees bent, looking over this low wall at the stage, and – to make it comfortable for their elbows as well as to look nice – the top of it had been padded with horsehair and covered with a maroon-coloured stuff called plush

So it was with no sound at all from his small five-toed feet that Jasper came – hastening, now – alone along this wall in front of the people seated there, their faces in the reflected glow of the footlights looking as white as china. Straight along this dizzy path he silently tippeted until he reached the place where Mr Bumps was sitting. There he stopped. He looked at Mr Bumps and bowed his head. Then he said something that few heard and nobody understood. He put out his hands towards Mr Bumps. And the two friends were restored to one another.

Now all this time the people had sat perfectly still, watching. But when they witnessed what had happened – and these two there, Jasper and Mr Bumps – though they didn't really know what to say or think, they all began to talk, and some to shout, even to hoot. They were angry. They were being cheated. *This* was not what they had paid all that money to see! Poor Mrs Bumps could even hear what those nearby were saying. She was growing more and more hot and discomfited. 'Oh, John! Oh, John!' she kept repeating.

And now the Manager, whom Jasper had come to like even less and less as his nights had gone by, appeared, marching on to the stage. He bowed to the King, he bowed to the Queen, he bowed to the Prince of Wales, and he called out in a loud voice that he was very sorry for what had happened. He said he was very sorry to them all. He said that he had paid pounds and pounds of money for Jasper to come and amuse them, and now here was this man up there enticing him away. He bawled out, 'Emperor Jasper, Emperor Jasper, come down, sir!'

Then some voices in the back parts of the theatre shouted, 'Turn him out!' and a great clamour began, some yelling

this and some that, and the Manager standing alone, fat and black and helpless in the middle of the stage, cajoling in vain Jasper to come back. As for Mr Smith – since he was dressed up as one of the Emperor's wives, and was a born actor, he felt that it was not his place to speak, especially before Royalty. His eyes rolled in his black-dyed face, but he said nothing.

Meanwhile, safe with his Mr Bumps again, Jasper had made not the faintest sign that he had even heard the Manager's call. And now, louder and louder, many voices were shouting, 'Send him back!' and some were bellowing, 'Let him stay!' and the uproar grew worse and worse.

At last the King himself stood up in the Royal Box and raised his hand. There was at once a great hush in the theatre. Everybody fell silent. The King said, 'Whose monkey is this marvel?'

With a frowning countenance he looked down upon the Manager. And the Manager answered not a word. Then the King turned his eyes towards Mr Bumps. He said, 'Let that man stand up.'

And Mr Bumps stood up.

'Who are you?' said the King.

'I am John Bumps, may it please your Majesty,' said Mr Bumps simply. 'First-mate of *The Old Lion*, now lying at Portsmouth.'

'What are you doing here?' said the King.

'I came, your Majesty – and this is Mrs Bumps beside me with the children – I came in hopes of seeing an old friend again.'

'Who?' said the King.

Mrs Bumps was now clutching tight her husband's hand, since it was hidden by the plush-topped wooden wall. His

voice faltered. He touched with his other hand Jasper's sable cap.

'This, sir,' he said.

'You mean,' said the King, smiling, 'his Serene Mightiness, the All-Excellent Ammanabi Nana Dah? Besecch his Mightiness to stand forth.'

This good-humour of the King greatly pleased all the people present, and every eye was now fixed on Mr Bumps.

'Now, Jasper,' whispered he, 'the King of England is speaking to 'ee.'

Jasper blinked but once at his old friend, pressed the finger clasped tight in his hand, and stood up on the plush parapet, before them all

And the King, his eye twinkling, said, 'Is it your wish cousin, that you remain with our loyal subject, Mr Bumps or' – and he swept his hand towards the Manager and the footlights.

An instant's silence followed.

And then, 'Thissee Misster Bumpss, ssir,' piped Jasper for he had never quite mastered his s's, 'thissee Misster Bumpss, ssir, iss my *firsst* friend. Mr Ssmith iss my o-the friend. My *firsst* iss. . . .' But the next word which was *firsst* was almost drowned by the shout of delight from thousand throats that went up to the roof of the theatre like the roar of an avalanche. It was fortunate for the Manager that he had already left the stage and gone into the back parts of the theatre.

And then and there Mr Bumps and Mrs Bumps and the three children and Jasper were conducted down to the Royal Box and were presented to His Majesty. And first the King and then the Queen and then the Prince of Wales

and then the little foreign princess shook hands with Jasper, and he spoke to them. And the King slipped a ring off his own finger and hung it round the neck of the Ethiopian Emperor. They met, one might say, as equals



But Mr Bumps being a sailor and an honest man, when the theatre was empty and the lights were out and the people gone away, sat down in a little back room behind the stage with the Manager and Mr and Mrs Smith, while Mrs Bumps and the children waited for them in Jasper's dressing-room. Here, the four of them, over a bottle of port wine, made a bargain together, so that the Manager should not lose too much money. The bargain was that for the whole of the next three days, except when it was time for Dinner or Tea, Jasper should sit on the stage of the *Fortune* in his gold and crimson, the King's ring dangling round his neck, his cap of sable on his head, while every man, woman or child who wished and could pay to see him, passed along – in at one door and out at another – before his throne. And of the cash they might take at the doors, it was agreed that the Manager should keep half, Mr Smith a quarter, and Jasper a quarter. Mr Bumps would take nothing. In those three days the Manager made more profit than he had ever made before in a whole month!

When the three days were over, Mr Bumps's leave from his ship was over too, and they all went down to Portsmouth. By the kindness of the captain of *The Old Lion*, it had been arranged that Jasper should come aboard – it was his wish – and return to Africa. He might, if he had so chosen, have stayed in England and lived in a palace for the rest of his life. His fame had run like wildfire through the

Kingdom, and far beyond it. Telegrams had come from Paris and Rome and Vienna and Budapest, and all parts of America, entreating him to visit them.

Apart from telegrams, the postman brought Jasper a small sack of letters every morning – from old ladies in the country who wished to adopt him, from learned professors of Oxford and Cambridge who wished to share his wisdom, from cunning men who hoped to make money out of him, and from all kinds of people grown-up and otherwise who asked him to put his name in their birthday books. And the King did not forget him. But Jasper refused everything – except the birthday books; he pined only for home.

In the meantime he himself made many presents to all his friends, and especially to little Kate, according to what he thought they would like best. The rest of his money – after he had said good-bye to Mr Johnson – had been packed in the cellar at the Bank into twenty-eight small chests or coffers. These were piled up in the cabin that had been prepared for him on *The Old Lion*. And a nice pile they made.

Besides this, with the captain's consent, Jasper and Mr and Mrs Bumps had bought a large quantity of all kinds of trinkets, toys, linen and silk, dainties and beverages that would not rust or tarnish or go bad upon the voyage, whatever weather they might encounter. Jasper had thought of everything that his own people round about Dondo might fancy and enjoy. And the King had commanded that on this voyage *The Old Lion* should fly not the red ensign but at the main truck the Royal Standard.

A crowd of people so vast thronged the quay and the windows and the roofs of the houses near by to see Jasper off that some of those in the front row were tumbled into the water. All except one had nothing worse than a sousing

and were picked up by row-boats. But the Manager unfortunately, who had pushed past some small boys for a better view, was drowned.

The best brass band in Portsmouth played *Rule Britannia*, and to the strains of *Rio Grande* the men of *The Old Lion* weighed anchor

Oh *say*, were you ever in Rio Grande? –

Awa-ay, Rio!

It's there that the rivers run down golden sand –

And we're bound for the Rio Grande

And awa-ay, Rio! – away, Rio!

Sing, fare you well, my bonny young gal,

We're bound for the Rio Grandel

She shook, she stirred. Softly a gentle breeze between the blue sky and the sparkling water belled out the sails of the ship. She drew away upon the water, past Nomansland Fort, where a gun puffed out to greet her, and smalled more and more. By the time Mrs Bumps and the three children sat down to tea, she was out of sight of land.

Mr Bumps had many a quiet and private talk with Jasper in his cabin as the days went by. Never had the old ship seen fairer weather. The two friends were sad at heart, for Mr Bumps knew that nothing he could say now would dissuade Jasper from returning to his own people. That, Jasper assured him, as well as what words he had could do so, was his *one* wish, and Mr Bumps could say no more.

Now the head village where Mr Bumps's friend the Chief of the Mlango-Nlangoes lived was a mile or more from the banks of the Quanza. It lay beyond a swamp where there is a forest of mangroves, the abode of countless crocodiles, though the two-horned rhinoceroses keep to

the river. Between the river and the swamp (where, if there were hundreds of crocodiles there must have been thousands of monkeys!) was a stretch of sand and green.

In this spot, out of sight of the river, but well in reach of the trees, the black men whom Mr Bumps's friend, the Chief of the Mlango-Nlango tribe, had very kindly lent him for the purpose, brought up not only Jasper's crates and tubs and boxes and barrels of rare nuts and fruits, fruits in syrup, biscuits, beads and gewgaws, etc., but also his money chests crammed tight with sovereigns and silver. For nothing that Mr Bumps or Mr Johnson or Mr and Mrs Smith could say, could persuade Jasper that all this money of his was just that and nothing more, and would be of no more use to his friends in their treetops, except perhaps for the beauty of it, than nut-shells or pebble-stones. It had been given to him, he kept saying, for what he had done; and therefore he would like to take it all back to his people – except of course what he wished to spend on the presents he had given to Mr Bumps and his other friends.

Since, then, Jasper, however much they argued, still wished to take back his money with him, Mr Bumps had said of course, 'Let it be so.' Just as the King had said.

When all Jasper's possessions had been piled up in the open space between the hidden river and the forest which he had chosen for his camping-place, and when a small bell-tent had been pitched for him beside them, it was evening. Strange voices of all manner of animals and birds sounded in their ears when Mr Bumps bade his friend good-night.

'I hope, Jasper,' he said, 'ay, and more than hope, that your kith and kin over there will be pleased to see you. I hope so. But they have been keeping mighty quiet.'

He said it with a faint heart, smiling at his little friend

dressed up, as he had himself decided, in his robes of gold and crimson, his sable cap on his head. Still, since Mr Bumps had promised to come back in the morning, this was not good-bye. It was only good-night.

When Mr Bumps did come back in the morning, Jasper greeted him sadly enough. Though he had heard in the night faint chatterings and shufflings, not a single friend of all he had known in past times – not one – had come near him. So at Mr Bumps's advice they unpacked some of the boxes and crates containing the dainties that smelt sweetest and strongest and strewed them about in enticing piles some little distance away from Jasper's tent and nearer the forest.

Next morning these had vanished, and yet Jasper had remained solitary and unvisited in his tent all the night long. He had not slept a wink. Never mind, he told Mr Bumps, his friends were no doubt shy and timid. He was sure they would be pleased to see him and longed to speak to him and welcome him back.

But morning after morning the piles grew less and less, the food was all gone, the toys and trinkets were scattered out of the boxes, only the money, the sovereigns and the silver, were left. And these the monkeys, having smelt and fingered them, left disowned.

Jasper thought at last it must be his royal robes, his antelope slippers, his cap and his colours that kept his people from knowing who he was. He said this smiling, to his friend Mr Bumps, but not as if he quite believed it.

That evening when they parted again, the air over Africa was heavy and stagnant and the sky lowering. Silent lightnings gleamed ever and again above the distant forests, and they could hear the tom-toms of the Mlango-Nlangoes.

The Isle of Lone

Three dwarfs there were which lived in an isle,
And the name of that isle was Lone,
And the names of the dwarfs were Alliolyle,
Lallerie, Muziomone.

Their house was small and sweet of the sea,
And pale as the Malmsey wine;
Their bowls were three, and their beds were three,
And their nightcaps white were nine

Their beds they were made of the holly-wood,
Their combs of the tortoise-shell,
Three basins of silver in corners there stood,
And three little ewers as well.

Green rushes, green rushes lay thick on the floor,
For light beamed a gobbet of wax,
There were three wooden stools for whatever they wore
On their humpity-dumpity backs

So each would lie on a drowsy pillow
And watch the moon in the sky –
And hear the parrot scream to the billow,
And the billow roar reply.

Parrots of sapphire and sulphur and amber,
Amethyst, azure and green,
While apes in the palm trees would scramble and clamber,
Hairy and hungry and lean.

All night long with bubbles a-glisten
The ocean cried under the moon,
Till ape and parrot too sleepy to listen
To sleep and slumber were gone

Then from three small beds the dark hours' while
In a house in the Island of Lone
Rose the snoring of Lallerie, Alliolyle,
The snoring of Muziomone

But soon as ever came peep of sun
On coral and feathery tree,
Three night-capped dwarfs to the surf would run
And soon were a-bob in the sea.

At six they went fishing, at nine to snare
Young foxes in the dells,
At noon in the shade on sweet fruits would fare,
And blew in their twisted shells

Dark was the sea they gambolled in,
And thick with silver fish,
Dark as green glass blown clear and thin
To be a monarch's dish

They sate to sup in a jasmine bower,
Lit pale with flies of fire,
Their bowls the hue of the iris-flower,
And lemon their attire.

Sweet wine in little cups they sipped,
And golden honeycomb
Into their bowls of cream they dipped,
Whipt light and white as foam

sullenly drumming from their hidden dancing-places Jasper had stripped himself of all his finery, and stood up beside his tent only in his own fur – a little monkey, as he was before. Mr Bumps shook him by the hand.

‘Good-night, old friend,’ he said, ‘and God-speed.’

But when he came back the next morning after the storm, the cap and the robes and the slippers and the gilded sceptre were gone. The tent had been blown away. And Jasper was gone too. Mr Bumps called and called and called. He came back in the evening and called again. No voice answered him. The forest lay dark and silent. Three days, by the kindness of the captain, to whom he had sent a black man as messenger, he waited and waited. But he waited in vain. And on the fourth *The Old Lion* sailed away.



The Bandog

Has anybody seen my Mopser? –
A comely dog is he,
With hair of the colour of a Charles the Fifth,
And teeth like ships at sea,
His tail it curls straight upwards,
His ears stand two abreast,
And he answers to the simple name of Mopser,
When civilly addressed.

Now Alliolyle where the sand-flower blows'
Taught three old apes to sing -
Taught three old apes to dance on their toes
And caper around in a ring.

They yelled them hoarse and they croaked them sweet,
They twirled them about and around,
To the noise of their voices they danced with their feet,
They stamped with their feet on the ground

But down to the shore skipped Lallerie,
His parrot on his thumb,
And the twain they scritch'd in mockery,
While the dancers go and come

And, alas! in the evening, rosy and still,
Light-haired Lallerie
Bitterly quarrelled with Alliolyle
By the yellow-sanded sea.

The rising moon swam sweet and large
Before their furious eyes,
And they rolled and rolled to the coral marge
Where the surf for ever cries.

Too late, too late, comes Muziomone
Clear in the clear green sea
Alliolyle lies not alone,
But clasped with Lallerie.

He blows on his shell low plaintive notes,
Ape, perequito, bec
Flock where a shoe on the salt wave floats, -
The shoe of Lallerie

He fetches nightcaps, one and nine,
Grey apes he dowers three,
His house as fair as the Malmsey wine
Seems sad as the cypress-tree

Three bowls he brims with sweet honeycomb
To feast the bumble-bees,
Saying, 'O bees, be this your home,
For grief is on the seas'

He sate him down in a coral grot,
At the flowing in of the tide,
When ebb'd the billow, there was not,
Save coral, aught beside

So hairy apes in three white beds,
And nightcaps, one and nine,
On moonlit pillows lay three heads
Bemused with dwarfish wine

A tomb of coral, the dirge of bee,
The grey apes' guttural groan
For Alliolyle, for Lallerie,
For thee, O Muziomone!

Now All the Roads

Now all the roads to London Town
Are windy-white with snow,
There's shouting and cursing,
And snortings to and fro;
But when night hangs her hundred lamps,
And the snickering frost-fires creep,
Then still, O; dale and hill, O,
Snow's fall'n deep.
Then still, O, dale and hill, O,
Snow's fall'n deep.

The carter cracks his leathery whip;
The ostler shouts Gee-whoa;
The farm dog grunts and sniffs and snuffs;
Bleat sheep; and cattle blow;
Soon Moll and Nan in dream are laid,
And snoring Dick's asleep,
Then still, O, dale and hill, O,
Snow's fall'n deep.
Then still, O, dale and hill, O;
Snow's fall'n deep

The Prince

Sweet Peridarchus was a Prince,
The Prince he was of – Mouses,
He roved and roamed the haunts of Men,
And ranged about their houses

He gnawed his way along a street,
Through holes in every wainscot,
Fandangoed in the attics and
From basement on to basement.

His eyes like bits of rubies shone,
His coat, as sleek as satin,
With teeth as sharp as needle-points
He kept to keep him fat in

His squeak so sharp in the small hours rang
That every waker wondered,
He trimmed his whiskers stiff as wire,
Had sweethearts by the hundred

He'd gut a Cheshire cheese with ease,
Plum cake devoured in slices,
Lard, haggis, suet, sausages,
And everything that nice is

Cork out, he'd dangle down his tail
For oil that was in bottle,
Nothing too sweet, nothing too fat
For Peridarchus' throttle.

He'd dance upon a chimney-pot, ♂
The merry stars a-twinkling,

Or, scampering up a chandelier,
Set all the lustres tinkling.

He'd skip into a pianoforte
To listen how it sounded;
He bored into a butt of wine,
And so was nearly drowned

At midnight when he sat at meat,
Twelve saucy sonsy maidens,
With bee-sweet voices ditties sang,
Some sad ones, and some gay ones

For bodyguard he had a score
Of warriors grim and hardy;
They raided every larder round,
From Peebles to Cromarty.

Grimalkin – deep in dreams she lay,
Comes he, with these gay friskers,
Steals up and gnaws away her claws,
And plucks out all her whiskers.

He scaled a bell-rope where there snored
The Bailiff and his Lady;
Danced on his nose, nibbled her toes,
And kissed the squalling Baby.

A merry life was his, I trow,
Despite it was a short one,
One night he met a mort of rats –
He bared his teeth, and fought one:

The Old Tailor

There was once an old Tailor of Hickery Mo,
Too tired at evening to sew, to sew,
He put by his needle, he snapped his thread,
And, cross-legged, sang to his fiddle instead.
His candle bobbed at each note that came
And spat out a spark from the midst of its flame;
His catgut strings they yelped and yawled,
The wilder their scrapings the louder he bawled;
The grease trickled over at every beat,
Welled down to the stick in a winding-sheet –
Till up sprang Puss from the fire, with a *WOW!*
'A *fine* kakkamangul you're making now!'

'Bonum Omen'

As we sailed out of London river,
 Sing a lo lay and a lo lay lone,
I heard a Maid sing – 'Come back, never!'
 And a lo lay lone

Her hair was yellow as sea-maids' hair is,
 Sing a lo lay and a lo lay lone,
And she'd corn for the chicks that are Mother Carey's,
 And a lo lay lone

Sam Murphy's grog went cold as water,
 Sing a lo lay and a lo lay lone,
And our hearts to our boots went tumbling after
 And a lo lay lone

When we're there and back – by gum, we'll see her,
 Sing a lo lay and a lo lay lone,
Buy cheap she may, but she sells de-ar
 And a lo lay lone

'Poor Bird'

Poor bird! –

No hands, no fingers thine;
Two angel-coloured wings instead:
But where are mine?

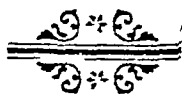
Cold voiceless fish! –

No hands, no spindly legs, no toes;
But fins and a tail,
And a mouth for nose.

Wild weed! –

Not even an eye with which to see!
Or ear, or tongue,
For sigh or song,
Or heart to beat,
Or mind to long.

And yet – ah, would that I,
In sun and shade, like thee,
Might no less gentle, sweet,
And lovely be!



The Magic Jacket

When, that May Day morning, Admiral Rumbold stepped out of his four-wheeled cab at the corner of Pall Mall, he was carrying a small brown-paper parcel. Why he had not told his cabman who – hunched up on his box – looked older even than his horse, to take him on to exactly where he wanted to go, he hardly knew. He paid the old man his fare, and he added an extra sixpence.

'Thank'ee,' he said with a curt nod, then turned to continue on his way. Admiral Rumbold was not exactly a stout man, but in his navy-blue clothes, his neat boots, and brown billycock hat, he looked rather tightly packed. His broad face shone almost as red as a tomato above his white linen collar and blue-and-white spotted silk sailor's knot. He clasped his neat little brown-paper parcel closely under his elbow, and at a good round pace proceeded along Pall Mall.

He glanced neither to right nor left of him, but kept his sea-bleached blue eyes fixed steadily ahead. Nor did he show the least sign of recognition when he caught sight of an old friend brandishing a silver-headed cane in his direction from under the hood of a hansom-cab. On this particular morning – and the houses and shops looked sparklingly gay in the spring sunshine – Admiral Rumbold wished to be alone. He marched straight on, his eyes fixed, his mouth tight-shut, almost as if he were walking in his sleep.

He turned sharply up St James's Street, past the saddler's with the jockey caps and jackets behind the glass, past the little bow-windowed snuff-and-tobacco shop, and so into King Street. From King Street he turned off into Duke

Street, and then on into Great St Ann's. After the bustle and traffic now behind him, the quiet sunshine and shade of Little St Ann's beyond it was like port after stormy weather.

Now a few paces past the hatter's shop that stood at the corner of Little St Ann's lay a wide smooth stretch of paving-stones under a high old brick wall. It was here that a screever or pavement artist had made his pitch; and in the sunshine Admiral Rumbold came to a halt and looked about him.

The street was still, and, at this early hour of the morning, almost deserted. For a while, firm as a rock, he continued so to stand. But having failed to catch a glimpse of what he was after, he began to survey a little vacantly the pictures chalked on the stones at his feet.

The first of them was of a ship with bare masts and long spars, tossing on an indigo sea, its waves yeastily crested with spray. Next to this there was a windmill in a grassy country green, the miller himself standing up like Shadrach Ham, and Japhet at the little rounded door above the wooden ladder. Next, there was a gaping brace of rainbow-coloured, rather flabby-looking mackerel. Next, a loaf of bread, a cut cheese, and a neat little long-tailed mouse for her supper. And last – and best of all to some tastes – there stood a lonely country mansion among its wintry trees, the wild full moon gleaming down on its walls. Scrawled beneath this picture, in a flowery lettering, was the word, 'HORNTED'.

Admiral Rumbold had taken a good long look at the pictures only the evening before. They showed a lively livelier in the morning sunshine. Still, he had come here not to have another look at them, but to have a word with the young artist. Few street chalkers, the Admiral

noticed in his walks abroad, are much less than forty. The one he now had in mind could not be more than fourteen. The Admiral had taken a liking to him at first sight, had often watched him at his work, and had dropped many a tuppence into the old cloth cap that usually lay (as if with its mouth wide open) beside the pictures. Now he wished to speak to him.

To an old gentleman with a temper as peppery as the Admiral's it was therefore an unpleasant jar to find that when he wanted the boy he was nowhere to be seen. Besides, he was anxious to get rid of the brown-paper parcel under his arm. He had a dislike to carrying anything at all – even an umbrella so massive that it looked more like a war club. On the other hand he was a man who, having once made up his mind, kept it made up.

He crossed the street, and spent the next few minutes pacing solemnly up and down, glancing ever and again as he did so down the area railings or up at the upper windows of the houses on that side of it, in order to pretend to himself that he was not being kept waiting. And every time he turned smartly on his heel, he glared first up the street, then down the street, and then into the deep-blue empty sky.

At last he had his reward. Shuffling along close to the railings from out of a neighbouring alley, in shoes that even at this distance looked a good deal more roomy than comfortable, appeared the boy the Admiral was in wait for. A coat that was at least two sizes too large for its present wearer hung down from his bony shoulders. But he had turned the cuffs up over the sleeves, so that his claw-like hands came out free from beneath them.

His odd, almost ugly face was pale and not too clean. His brown hair was lank and tousled. But as the Admiral had

noticed before, the skull beneath the hair was nut-shaped and compact, clear over the forehead and wide towards the back. It looked as if it closely fitted something valuable inside it. Besides which, the boy had a pair of eyes in the pinched face looking out from under that skull, which once seen were not easily forgotten.

Admiral Rumbold, at sight of him, had slipped in under the carved shell-shaped porch of one of the neighbouring houses. From here he could see without being seen.

First, the boy glanced into his cap, then took it up, turned it upside down, shook it, and replaced it on the pavement. He then drew a large dingy rag out of his pocket, that might once have been the flap of a man's shirt or a woman's petticoat. With both hands he waved this to and fro above his pictures to waft away the dust and straw and soot-smuts. He then pushed the rag into his pocket again, and had a steady look at the pictures, as if he had never seen them before and could not make up his mind whether or not to give himself a penny. He then sighed – a sigh that in the morning quietness was clearly audible. At this Admiral Rumbold stepped out of his hiding-place, crossed the road, and accosted him.

'Good morning, my boy,' was his greeting. 'How's business?'

The boy looked up into the round red face of the old gentleman, with its small beak-like nose and sky-blue eyes, and a timid smile passed over his own as he shook his head.

'So, so!' said Admiral Rumbold bluffly. 'Nothing much, eh? There's a bit of east in the wind this morning, and perhaps that keeps folk moving. Or perhaps . . . Well, there we are! Had any breakfast? No? Good! I want a word with 'ee. Is there a place handy where we can sit and talk?'

The boy coloured, glanced swiftly from right to left, and told the Admiral of a coffee-shop near at hand where he sometimes went himself. Then he looked up at the old Admiral again, became redder than ever, and broke off.

'Full steam ahead, then,' said his friend. 'And do you lead the way.'

The boy buttoned his coat away they went together, and in a minute or two the pair of them were sitting face to face on two benches between wooden partitions – like the high pews in old churches – and on either side of a table in an eating-house half-way up the neighbouring alley. The Admiral asked the boy what he would take. He said a mug of thick.

At this the Admiral cocked one of his bright blue eyes, and enquired if he would like anything to eat with it. The boy hesitated, and suggested a door-step.

'H'm!' said the Admiral, 'and anything for a sweet tooth to follow?'

The boy said he would like a cat's-eye. Whereupon Admiral Rumbold rapped smartly on the table. A man with greasy black hair, of a dark face, and wearing a rather dingy apron, appeared from his den behind the shop.

'Good morning,' said the Admiral. 'Two mugs of thick, a door-step, and a cat's-eye.' And he said the words as if he had been used to them all his life and knew exactly what they meant.

The mugs of thick proved to be cocoa, the door-step a slab of bread with a scrimp of butter, and the cat's-eye was a large yellow bun with a burnt raisin stuck in its crown. And while the two of them sipped their thick, and the boy from rubbing went on to munching at his door-step, Admiral Rumbold explained what he was after.

But first he asked him a little about himself and his work. He learned that the boy was pretty well alone in the world. His father, who had been a carriage painter, had died when he was six. His own business was fair in fine weather, but it was hard to find a pitch where there were neither too many passers-by nor too few. 'And then there's the bobbies,' said the boy. Summer was better than winter, but up to the last week or two there had been too much rain for any business at all.

'Ay, ay,' said the Admiral, looking at him over the thick brim of his mug as he took another sip of cocoa, 'a fine-weather trade, I take it.' And he asked him what his name was. It was Mike.

'Well now, Mike,' said Admiral Rumbold at last, 'I've been keeping an eye on you for some little time. I've been *wanting* to keep an eye on someone of your age and looks for a good deal longer. I like your pictures; in fact, I *admire* them. If I were to sit down under that wall with every scrap of chalk you've got and do my level best with them, rain or no rain, I warrant my takings wouldn't be fourpence a month. It's the knack you want. And it's the knack, my lad, you have.

'Not, mind you,' he went on, 'that I know any more about pictures than what I *like*. I leave the rest to them that do. But I've lived a good many years in the world now, and my belief is that every walk in life begins with a steepish bit of hill. When I was a boy – and we're not concerned just now with where *my* walk's led *me* – I had to face mine. And in this parcel here is – well, what helped me in the climbing of it.

'*Here*,' repeated the Admiral and said no more for the moment. For he had brought his square solid hand down on

the parcel beside his mug with such a thump that the man in the apron came hurrying up to see what more was wanted

'I'll have,' said the Admiral promptly, 'another mug of thick and another couple of door-steps And this time put in a slice or two more of beef and bacon by way of cement.'

The sandwiches that followed were almost as much meat as bread, and Mike's eyes fairly watered as they were handed over to him

'In this parcel, as I was saying,' continued the Admiral, 'is the *story* of what I've been telling you A yarn, you'll understand Tell me, can you *read*?' Mike nodded violently, his mouth was full

'Good!' said the Admiral 'All I want you to do is to read it - it's about a *jacket* - what might be called a slice out of my early days, just as that bacon there maybe a slice out of the early days of the pig it came from There's no hurry -' he glanced at the clock and then at his gold repeater - 'it's seventeen and a half minutes past ten Sit here quietly and read as much of it as you can When you have finished, come along to me At eleven sharp I'll be waiting near the pitch

'Mind ye,' he ended as he rose to his feet, 'there's no shadow of *must* in that package whatsoever Nor do I vouch for anything beyond what's written - and I've had it printed out on one of those new-fangled machines so that it can be read plain and easy Take it quietly, ask for anything you want while I'm away, and in half an hour we meet again'

He put down half-a-crown on the table for the door-steps, etc., laid his hand an instant on Mike's shoulder, and looked him hard but friendly in the eye. Then he instantly

flung open the swing-door of the coffee-shop and went out into the street.

To judge from his face, the old gentleman was very well pleased with himself at this moment. He returned to the pictures, and spent the next half-hour, as cautiously as before, in pacing to and fro along the street. Whenever he passed them he paused to look at them, dropped a copper or two into the cap, and went on. At this, some curious passer-by would also stop and glance over Mike's gallery. And, maybe, he too would fling in a penny to join the Admiral's - and, maybe, not.

Meanwhile, Mike, left to himself and now the only customer in the coffee-shop, took a good long swig of his mug of cocoa and a munch at his sandwich before setting to work on the Admiral's story. And this was what he read:

*

'Coming down to facts at once, I was born all but seventy years ago, in a town in Shropshire of the name of P—. My father was a grocer - retail. His shop wasn't much to look at from outside, but there was little that his customers wanted in the way of groceries that couldn't be found even then on his shelves.

'My father was a man of about forty when I came into the world. My mother was a good deal younger; and mightily pleased they were to have me. No doubt about that. They christened me Andrew and called me Sandy, there being Scotch blood on my father's side. And if hard work and steady is a short cut to success, that was my father's way.

'At first, my father and mother were content to live over the shop - three rooms in all, not including one not much

bigger than a handbox, which was called the nursery. When I was six, things were going so well with the business that they decided to let the rooms above the shop, and to move into a small but comfortable, high and (what they call) semi-detached house, half a mile or so out of the town. We had a good strip of garden there – a few apple and plum trees, some currant and gooseberry bushes, and old country flowers.

‘My mother loved that garden, and spent all the time she could spare from the house in it, with me beside her, or digging away at a patch of soil, three yards by one, with scallop shells round the border, which she let me have to do what I pleased with. That was *my* garden. *Sandy-land*, she called it. Candytuft, Virginia stock, and Sweet Williams were my own particular crops.

‘My mother, I remember, bless her soul, was a great talker. I don’t mean by this that she talked too much, or talked to everybody, or never listened. I mean she was a great talker to me, though not so much to my father. What she and I chattered about when we went out shopping in the morning together, or when I used to help her make the beds, would fill a book. Everything under the sun, not to mention the other side of it.

‘I don’t know what there was about my mother – brown eyes, brown hair, and so on. But hanging up over the pianoforte in what was called our drawing-room was a portrait of her as a girl of eighteen or thereabouts which if I had been any kind of young man with an eye in his head I should have fallen in love with at first sight. But it wasn’t her looks, it was her ways. How to put it I don’t know, but she always seemed to be talking as if to somebody over her shoulder as well as to me myself.

'Never – and mine's a pretty long life now – never have I come across anyone with such a loving delight in birds, flowers, trees, clouds, stars, moss, butterflies, and all that. She knew them by heart. You might have thought she'd had a hand in their making. Words aren't my tools, and I must get things down as straight as I *can*. But that was the way of it. To see her look at a toadstool, with some bright colour to its gills, or peep into a wren's or chaffinch's nest, or stand watching a bevy of long-tailed tits gossiping together for a minute or two in one of our tufted old apple-trees on their way to somebody else's, was like – well, I don't know what it wasn't like, except that it was like nothing on earth but my mother. She wasn't any *age* at all. We might have been a couple of brothers or sisters – old cronies, as you might say. We could hardly tell each other apart – except when my father was by.

'Now, I'm not going to say anything against *him*. He died when I was not much more than a quarter of the way up the ladder I was afterwards to set myself to climb. He did his best by me, and if it hadn't been for my own stubborn interference, he might have done better for me than I've done for myself. Can't say; don't *know*. What I wanted was to go my own way, as at last I went. And your own way is nobody's else's way. It's a man's self – his *innards*, to speak abruptly, that counts. Not the stripes on his arm, or the cut of his jib, or the cash in his bank, or even what he's *done*.

'But enough of that. The truth is perhaps that being so much alone with my mother, and as contented in her company, at least in those first few years, as a butterfly with a flower, I became a bit of an apron-string child. She did not much care for going out, and she had a mighty small

opinion of any young Two-Legs in the street except the one she herself had brought into the world, so I was only allowed to play with any small Tom, Dick, or Harry belonging to our neighbours provided I never went beyond view of her bedroom window. And that's not much of a playground for a healthy young sprat that ought to be learning what the sea looks like.

'Alone with her, and at peace, I wanted nothing else and could chatter away like a grasshopper. Away from her, I was usually little better than a tongue-tied numskull, flushing up to the eyebrows at a word from a stranger, and looked too shy and timid to say Boh to a goose – even to the goose in my own looking-glass! Well, numskull is as numskull does, and as the old wooden-legged sailor said,

*When all you've got is a couple of stump,
There's nowt to do but go clump – clump – clump!*

'My father could not see it that way. He began to think I was stupid on purpose. There was not a sharper tradesman in the county, nor a more honest tradesman either, in spite of the "sharp". All his wits were at his finger-tips. He had a memory like a dictionary. He knew where everything was or ought to be. He could tell a bargain at first wag of its tail and a good customer before he opened his mouth. He lived long enough to make three fine shops of his poky first one – plate-glass windows, plenty of gold paint, three smart vans and about a dozen glossy-haired assistants in clean white aprons. And he stowed a handsomer show of tea-chests, sugar loaves, jam-jars and piccalilli pots behind those windows than any other grocer in the town. I owe him unspeakably more than the little fortune he left me.

‘But being what he was, he was impatient with anything else, and particularly with me, his own son. *Now*, I understand it. *Then*, the moment I saw his black hat above the hedge, or heard his key in the lock, I would scuttle away like a frightened rabbit. If we were left alone together, I would sit as glum as a cold plum-duff pudding – without any plums in it! If he asked me a question, every word would fly out of my head, like rooks at a rattle. The mere look of me at such times – fumbling and stammering – made him angry. The more angry he grew the more tongue-tied and lumpish grew I, and that would set my poor mother weeping. And I have never yet met a father who enjoyed being told that he could not understand his own son. Not that he loved me a penny the less; far from it. But love, my boy, is like coal. You can burn it, and warm and comfort yourself with its light and heat. Or you can keep it in a cellar. My father kept his in a cellar – and it was I who helped him stack it up!

‘With my mother, as I have said already, everything was different. We would gossip away together for hours. And when she wasn’t with me I would talk to myself. I had plenty of books in my bedroom under the roof – books that had belonged to my mother’s younger brother who died at sea. And I read like a limpet. When in those days I opened a book that seemed meant for me – travels, voyages, that kind of thing – it was like exploring another world. Fancy tales I never took to – except journeys to the moon, or the middle of the earth, and suchlike – nor could even my mother win me to rhymes.

‘Maybe it was all this book-stuff and solitude and having nobody to play with that began this odd habit in me of talking to myself when I was alone. And it was this talking

to myself that led on to the great discovery. One evening, I remember, I was reading about the supper to which Sir Francis Drake invited the officer on his ship who had been stirring up mutiny against him, and whom he hanged next morning. And as I was listening to myself talking like the officer and putting up as stiff a lip as I could at the prospect of so harsh a breakfast, I suddenly discovered that there was not *one* of me, so to say, but two. I discovered what's called a second self – though of course he must have been there all the time. To make things plain and shipshape, let us call the first of these two selves, Sandy One, and the second of these two selves, Sandy Two.

There was first the Sandy One that was my father's son, and stayed at home with his mother in the high, oblong box of a house, standing up high on the hull with its neighbours, all in a row. This was the nervous, timid, stuttering Sandy, the Sandy who did not know where he kept his own tongue, the skulker, the dunderhead whom my father could not make head or tail of. There was next the Sandy who when alone did more or less what he liked and went where he pleased – desert islands, Red Indians, lions and tigers, castaways, cannibals, *bonum omen* – all that kind of thing. Ay, and the whole world over. He pined for freedom. He wanted to do and dare things. He wanted to eat his cake and chance the stale crusts afterwards. This happy-go-lucky, scatter-brained, dare-devil creature boxed up inside me was Sandy Two. We'll call him, as I say, Sandy Two and, Here's good luck to him! – for he needed it!

'Now, do you see, my mother knew something of both Sandies, though more of One than Two. My father never so much as dreamt of Two and saw not much more of One than his worst. And Sandy Two, at his darndest and

daringest, was at present inside my head and kept for myself and my books alone.

‘Now Schooling. . . .’

★

Mike took a long slow look at this word before going any further. He was already a little tired of reading. He wanted to get to the jacket. Still, he had promised the old gentleman, who seemed to be an old gentleman who expected his promises to be kept, that he would do his best, and he had had an *uncommonly* good breakfast. So he swallowed another gulp of his tepid cocoa, took another huge bite of his door-step, and plodded on.

★

‘Now Schooling. Well, I went to school like most boys of my age. It was what is called a Private School, and the head-master’s name was Smiles; and his name was not only where his smiles began but also ended. From the instant my father led me into his stuffy back-room, this Mr Smiles took me for a Dunce. One glance at my sheepish mottled face – Sandy One’s – was enough for that. And as dunce he treated me almost until we parted. Dunce was his chief dish with me, from beginning to end – and plenty of cane sauce.

‘I hated school. I hated learning. And as I was told to go straight home the moment my lessons were over, I was never much of a favourite with the other boys. They took me for a molly-coddle, and called me Tallow-candy. Which was true of course of Sandy One. And for some little time they never caught sight of Sandy Two. That came later. Still, whenever Sandy One warmed up so

much in a scrap as to bring Sandy Two into it, it wasn't the other fellow that left off last!

'Well now, to make a long story short, my father's heart, as I have been saying, was in groceries. And you can take my word for it that there is one thing at least worse than a quick profit on pickles, and that is a dead loss on 'em. His business was growing, he pulled his weight wherever he went, he was soon to be Mayor, and having only one son, he hoped and meant that that son should go into groceries too, and perhaps some day *double* his fortune, keep a carriage, and become *Lord* Mayor. He wanted his son to "get on", and what father doesn't?

'So in the old days, just to polish my wits, he would ask me such questions as what raisins are, or where currants come from, or why peel is called candied, and then – with a flicker of his eyelids – who discovered the Macaroni Tree, or how much fresh there is to a pound of salt butter, or where the natives dig up nutmegs, or what is the temperature of Cayenne pepper, or what is the cost of a hogshead of treacle at 2½d an ounce. The point is, I never even *wanted* to know such things. And worse, I couldn't even laugh at them!

'If my father had asked me what kind of birds you'd be likely to see flitting about in the craters of the moon, or what the war-whoop and scalping habits of the Ojibwas or the Cherokees were, or how many brothers riding on white asses Abimelech had, I believe Sandy Two would have consented to answer. But Sandy Two (apart from toffee) had no interest whatever in Demerara or Barbados sugar, and Sandy One was no better than a blockhead at any questions whatsoever, except when his mother asked them, or when he was alone.

'One Sunday morning, after I had first said I couldn't answer, and then refused to try to answer, some such questions as these, I looked up and told my father that I hated grocery shops. I said of all shops I hated grocery shops the most I said I detested school, and that the only thing in the world I wanted was to run away to sea. Then I burst out crying. At this moment my mother came in, so I never got the thrashing I richly deserved.

'But my father must have thought things over, for after that, Dr Smiles paid very particular attention to the *grocery* side of history, geography, arithmetic and dictation. Even of French "Has your neighbour's gardener the oranges from Jaffa, the tapioca from Brazil, and the chicory for the coffee of his aunt?" – that kind of thing.

'Then one night I overheard my mother and father talking. Sandy Two had come stealing downstairs about half-past nine to see what he could find in the larder. The door of the drawing-room was ajar, and I heard my father say: "He is not only half-witted, but as limp and flabby as a rag doll – and what's more, here's that bladder-of-lard, schoolmaster Smiles, saying exactly the same thing. And yet *you*. . . ." At these words Sandy One at once fled back to bed – taking Sandy Two with him. And I awoke next morning remembering what my father had said as distinctly as if it had been tattooed into my skin. For days together after that Sandy Two never so much as showed the tip of his nose in the house.

'Then, one afternoon, on my way home from school, I ventured down a shabby side-street, because at the far end of it I had caught the noise of a Punch-and-Judy Show. I could hear the children roaring with laughter, and the squeaking and the thumping and cockadoodle-ing of Mr

Punch Sandy Two told Sandy One he would like to go and see it. So he went.

'Coming back, we passed a dingy little shop I had never noticed there before, and we stopped to look in at the window *Marine Store* was printed up in white letters over the green front. There was some queer junk behind that window old shoes and shawls and old hats, a ship in a bottle, a green glass rolling-pin, a telescope that must have belonged to Noah, a ship's compass, a brass cannon, a bed-warmer, a picture made of humming-birds' feathers – such old curios as they call 'em as that. They looked as if they had been there for centuries – verdigris, mould, fluff, dust. Most of these articles had their prices marked on scraps of paper "*Grate Bargain, 3s 6d*" and so on

'And hanging up on a nail in a corner of the window and almost out of sight, was a kind of garment I couldn't quite put name to. But a piece of paper was pinned to it, and on that was scrawled the words *Majick Jacket*. Just that and nothing more. But it was enough. I had already gloated on the telescope and the ship and the brass cannon. But those two words, *Majick Jacket*, fairly took my breath away. They stirred me up as if with a ladle – me myself, Sandy Two, and even Sandy One. At last I could bear the strain no longer.

'I pushed open the crack-paint little door – I can hear even now the jingle of its rusty bell – and in I went. The place smelt like an old cellar. It was as soundless as a vault. For what seemed hours nothing happened, except that I heard a far-away canary singing, then Sandy One began to be alarmed, and I tiptoed off towards the door.

'Just as I was about to whip it open and bolt out into the street agun, an old man, with thick magnifying spectacles

on his nose and a beard like a goat, came shuffling out of the back parts of the shop, and asked me what I wanted.

'I said would he please tell me the price of the brass cannon – though I knew it already. Then I asked to see the ship in the bottle. And then, at last, with hardly any breath left in my body, I managed to point to the jacket.

"That," he said, looking first at it and then at me, "that's ten shillin'."

'I got as red as a turkey-cock, coughed, turned about, and opened the door.

"I say! I say, Mister!" he called after me. "What are you running away for? Come back and see it. Come back and look at it – *feel* it. No harm in that!" He was already climbing up on to a stool. Then he thrust his head in among the rags and drabs in the window, brought down the jacket, and laid it on the counter. And close-to, like this, it was nothing much, I must say, to look at.

'It was made of some kind of foreign dark Chinese-looking stuff, with a faint wavy pattern on it, and it had flat stone buttons with green crocodiles curled round on them. The braid was frayed at the neck and cuffs. I looked hard at it on the counter, but didn't touch it. Then I blurted out: "Who made it?"

"Made it?" snapped the old man, "that's a *magic* jacket. That's come from Peking and Madagascar and Seringapatam and I don't know what, and if once you get inside of it you'll never want to get out again."

'I swallowed. "Have you ever put it on?" I enquired.

"Me?" he almost bellowed at me. "Me! with all these old slops hanging round! Where should I be if I put 'em all on? Where's the *sale*?"

'Now I wanted that jacket with the crocodiles on the

buttons more than anything else past, present or future in the whole wide world. But I had only two-and-ninepence in my pocket – and that was riches for *me*. To be on the safe side, I told the old man this. He stared at me through his rusting spectacles.

“See here!” he said, as if in a violent temper, and whisking out a piece of newspaper from under the counter. “See here now, snap it!” And he wrapped up the jacket in a flash. “Give me all you’ve got, and come back with the rest. There’s a summat in your eye, young man, that never went with a cheat.”

Then I knew that the old man was charging me at least double what he had meant to ask for the jacket. But I gave him my two-and-ninepence all the same, and went out of the shop. Before his door bell had stopped clanging I had pushed the parcel up under my waistcoat, and walked off, keeping my stomach in, because I didn’t want anybody to ask questions.

Once safely home, I crept upstairs and slipped the parcel in at the back of a drawer, and for that night there it stayed. I didn’t dare to meddle with it, partly for fear of what might happen, but mostly of what might *not*!

All the next morning I was in torture. I was afraid my mother might find the jacket – and give it away to some tramp for a fern or a pot of geraniums. Every time I thought of it I could scarcely breathe, and that didn’t help much in my school-work. I was kept in. And when I came home I told my mother I had a headache – which was true – but persuaded her at last to go out and leave me to myself. Then I stole up to my bedroom, shut the door, opened the drawer, and with my heart in my mouth, felt for the parcel. All safe! All safe! I took it out, undid the string, opened the

paper, and there was the jacket - wavy pattern, crocodile buttons, frayed braid and all.

'With a last wild look towards the window I took off my own coat and put it on I put it on And nothing happened. Nothing whatever. At first blush, I mean. Except that I suddenly noticed that the room was full of sunshine and that a thrush was singing in a pear tree at the bottom of the garden. I noticed it because he sang so clear and shrill, and as though straight at me If you could put sound for sight, it was as if I were listening to him through a telescope. I could see him, too, the speckles on his breast, and his bill opening and shutting - singing like an angel

'And as I listened I noticed in the sunlight through the window the colours of my faded rose-patterned carpet and an old boot It sounds silly, but I had never before seen an old boot look like that. I don't want to mince words, and maybe I didn't realize it then, but the fact of the matter is that that old boot on the carpet looked astonishingly beautiful - the light on the old leather, the tongue coming out, and the gleam of the metal eyelets. A landshark's word that - beautiful - but there you are.

'Well, I was soon a little impatient with all this - a new life seemed to have edged into things, or at least into me. Very peculiar So, to get back to common sense again, I began Sandy One's *Physical Exercises*. Exercises! Why, it was as though all of a sudden I had become nothing but a twist of wire and catgut. I skipped through those gymnasticals as if I were half out of my senses. Then I tried tricks never so much as dreamt of before - hopping along my bedrail, standing on my head, first on the bedpost, then on my water-jug; balancing myself - two hands, then one hand - on the back of a chair. Whatever, within

the bounds of reason, or thereabouts, I gave myself to do, I *did* – and with ease. Like the thrush singing Nothing very much perhaps, but new to *me*! Mind you, I had never been quite the mollie my father thought me And Sandy Two hadn't been idle, body or wits But a little confidence, though not too much, is what you want. After a while I began to be a little bit alarmed at the effects of the jacket. I began, so to speak, to suspect my own company!

'So, hot and breathless, I sat down at the table where I always did (or didn't do) my homework, and began my "composition" The subject was the Battle of Trafalgar Before I had finished I had written about fourteen pages on the Battle of Trafalgar! I had described how the *Victory* went to sea, and what Lord Nelson felt like – that last day coming, and why he kept his medals on, and all about Captain Hardy And I put the weather in, and didn't forget old Froggy Villeneuve either – a gallant sailor and a bad end When I looked up from page fourteen I could hardly see. It was as if I had come out of the heavenly Jerusalem! And then, almost at that moment; I heard my mother come in down below, and the front door shut.

'I felt like a keg of quicksilver, and yet dead beat. I undressed in less time than a lizard takes to slough its tail, and tumbled into bed, slipping my Chinese jacket in under the bedclothes

'And no doubt I looked headachy enough when my mother came up to say good-night. She felt my forehead, it was burning hot And she murmured faintly in a very small voice something about castor oil Even Sandy One could put his foot down when it came to castor oil! But this time I didn't make the least fuss about it. I said, "Right you are Warm the glass, mother, and put plenty of lemon

juice in." I swigged it down, and even smacked my lips over it. Then I began to talk – so fast, and with such nonsense mixed up with the sense, that my mother was on the point of calling in the doctor. At that I sobered down again.

'The next day all was well, but I didn't go to school. The next day after that saw me back in my place again, though not in the magic jacket! But I had cut off one of the pale-green crocodile buttons to carry about in my waistcoat pocket for a kind of charm or amulet. I got a caning for the French I hadn't done, and another caning for the arithmetic which I had. Mr Schoolmaster Smiles himself read my *Essay on the Battel of Trafalger* then and there. He hauled me out again before the class, and asked me what help I had had. I said none. He glared at me: "Are you positively sure, sir? Not even in the spelling?"

"I said, "No, sir; none, sir." What was queer, he believed me.

'Still, he had talked to me once or twice about the sea and the Navy. And I too had asked him questions, because while I was wrapped up in the thought of them, I wasn't so frightened of him. Besides, on looking back, I don't believe he really cottoned to groceries much more than I did. Anyhow, he gave me full marks and a bit over for my *Trafalgar*, but warned me another time I mustn't "spread" myself out like that.

'I went home feeling like a turkey-cock, marched straight upstairs, sat down at my open window, and – put on the jacket again. But I had hardly got my arms into the sleeves when I heard my mother calling me. I hustled on my own jacket over the top of the other – which was not difficult, because my Chinese one was a very tight fit, especially at the armpits – and met her on the landing. She was as white

as a sheet and could scarcely speak. She said my father wanted to see me at once, and that he had a friend with him, a Mr Turner

"And, oh, my dear," she implored me, "do try and answer your father's questions Just *listen*, Sandy Then perhaps you'll hear And speak up to Mr Turner, too, if he speaks to you Think it's *me* Don't be frightened, don't be *sulky* Nobody can eat you Fancy it's only just you and me talking For my sake, Sandy "

"I said, "Right, mother!" and slid from top to bottom down the banisters of the three flights of stairs almost before she had stirred foot to follow me At the dining-room door I pulled myself together, and went in.

"My father was sitting on the other side of the fireless hearth, talking to a stranger I liked the look of this stranger. He was short and broad, his face was burnt with the sun, he had a fringe of reddish hair round his head, and wore thick-soled shoes "Here he is," said my father to the stranger, then turned to me. "This gentleman is Mr Turner, Andrew If you want to know anything about the sea, he'll tell you " I put out my hand

"I hear you've no stomach for dry goods," said Mr Turner, staring at me, but in a friendly fashion "Have a hankering after salt water, eh?"

"Yes," I said, "the Navy " Out of the corner of my eye I saw my father start at this He had never before heard me answer so direct a question without stammering or flushing or just goggling like a red herring with its mouth open

"And what do you know about the sea?" said Mr Turner, looking at me steadily "It's pretty deep!"

"I looked back at him no less steadily I liked him more and more, and thought I would try him with a few tit-bits

out of my fourteen pages on the Battle of Trafalgar. There was a queer silence when I had finished. And I realized that my mother had at that moment stolen away after listening at the door. As for my father, he sat in his chair dumb with amazement. He shut his eyes for an instant and then began to explain that I was not perhaps so backward in some things as in others. But, apart from mere book-learning, did Mr Turner think that I had the framework, the grit, the *health* for a life in the open? "You see, his mother. . . ."

"He looks a bit pasty," said Mr Turner, still quietly grinning at me. "But you can't always tell by the skin. What about those biceps, young man?"

"I put out my arm, and he gripped it hard above the elbow, not noticing, perhaps, that I had two jackets on. And he said, "Pretty good. Do they drill you much at school? Or is it nothing but book-learning?" I nodded, and said, "Yes; and things at home, too."

"What do you do at home?" says he.

"Now all this time I had been feeling like a bottle of ginger-beer before the cork pops out. So when he gave the word, so to speak, I upped with my heels and pretty nearly trotted across the room on the palms of my hands.

"Bravo," said Mr Turner. "Try that on the table."

"It was a circular solid old-fashioned mahogany table, made when Queen Victoria was a girl, and I circumnavigated it on my fingers and thumbs as nimbly as a cat. But now my blood was up. To give me room, a couple of tumblers, a bottle of water, and a decanter of whisky had been pushed into the middle of the table. Balancing myself on one hand, I poured out with the other a noggin of the water - for I couldn't quite venture on the whisky - into one of the tumblers, and singing out, "*Nelson, for ever!*"

drank it off. Then, spluttering and half-choking, I got down from the table, and at last looked at my father.

‘He was so pale as to be all but green. He looked as if he was sea-sick. He said, “Has your mother ever seen you do such things as that?” I shook my head. But Mr Turner was laughing. What’s more, he hadn’t finished with me yet.

“Have you got such a thing as a stout piece of rope, William – say a dozen fathom?” he asked my father. There were few things my father was *not* possessor of. We went out into the garden, and as neat as ninepence Mr Turner flung a bight of the rope over one of the upper branches of a fine shady sycamore that grew so close to the house that its leaves in summer actually brushed against the windows.

“Try that, young man,” said my father’s friend, Mr Turner, when he had made it fast.

‘Well, whether it was due to the devil in Sandy Two or only to the workings of the magic jacket, I don’t know, but I shinned up that unknotted rope like a monkey up a palm tree. And when I reached the top, I edged along on my stomach till I was almost at the end of the bough. Then at arms’ length I began to dandle on it – up and down, up and down, like a monkey on elastic. When it had given me enough swing and impetus – what’s called *momentum* – I let go – and landed as pat as a pea-shooter through the open window on to the landing, the sill of which was some twelve feet from the ground.

‘When I came down into the garden again, my father and Mr Turner were having a close, earnest talk together, under the sycamore. My father looked at me as if I had just come back from the Andaman Islands.

‘I said, “Was that all right, daddy?”

‘But he made no answer, only patted me on the shoulder,

turning his head away. And from that moment, and for ever after, we were the best of friends, my father and I; though he never had the ghost of a notion of what had caused Sandy Two – whom, mind you, he had never noticed before – to sprout like that!

‘But then, that’s how things go And – to cut a long story short – by hook and by crook, by twisting and turning – chiefly my father’s – which would take too long to put down in black and white, I won free of groceries at last for good and all. And the next spring I went to sea for a trial voyage. And after *that*, though it was pretty hard going – well, I got into the Navy.

‘And now, here I am, for good and all on land again. Not much short of being an old man, but still, thank God, hale and hearty, and able and willing, I hope, to do a fellow creature a good turn at need. And this, my lad, is where *you* come in.

‘The fact of the matter is, I had watched you scrabbling away with your chalks at your pitch in Little St Ann’s a good many days before you knew it. And I came to two conclusions First, that your pictures are proof that you can do good work And second, that you could do much better. What I feel is you keep *yourself* back, do you see? It’s the old story of Sandy One and Sandy Two. You haven’t the confidence, the go, the guts (in a word), to forge clean ahead, *your* way.

‘That’s what I say. I see you setting to work in the morning like a young cockatrice, but presently you begin to waver, you become slack and dispirited. The least little mishap – broken chalk, some oaf *walking* over the pictures, even a cloud floating up over the sun – shakes your nerve. At such times you don’t seem to be sure even of what you

want to do, let alone how to do it You nuzzle at a picture first one way, then another, and at the end give it up in despair, the zest gone, and the fancy gone, and the spirit – what I call the innards – gone too And when any stranger speaks to you, or drops a copper in your cap, you flush up, droop, go limp and dumb, and look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth.

'Now first, my boy, don't mind what I am saying It is for your *sake* I wouldn't be taking the trouble except only and solely in the hope and wish of doing you a small service And remember this, I've been through it all before you – and may, when the end comes, again I've known what it is to feel my bones melt in my body, to tremble like a jelly, my face like a plaster mask and my skull as empty as a hulk on a sandbank In two words, I know of old what it's like to be *Sandy One* So, you see, it's because I'm morally certain there's a *Sandy Two* in *you* – and maybe one beyond anything I can conjecture – that I'm writing this now

'I like the cut of your jib, and the way you stick to things in spite of all dispiritment and the dumps I had my eye on him when you marked the mug (for good, I hope) of that suety butcher's boy the other day who spat on your Old Boney I want to give you a hand *in your own line*, and see no better way of doing it than by just lending you my old Peking jacket for a bit. Now what do you think about that?

'Maybe it won't work. Maybe its magic's gone Maybe I imagine as much as I remember about it. But I can say *this* – the last time I squeezed into it before the toughest engagement I ever came out of alive I reckon it blew up the enemy's ship at least two hours before she'd have gone to the bottom in the usual way Mind you, I haven't often

used it. When I was your age, an hour or two of it tired me out for half the next week. A day or two of it might take a complete month to recover from. Besides, if you look at the matter by and large, and fair and square, you can see it wouldn't do. In the long run we have to trust to what we have in us that's constant and natural, so to speak, and work like a nigger at that. It's only in tight corners we need a little extra fire and frenzy. *Then* maybe Dame Fortune will see fit to lend a helping hand.

'So all I say is, give the jacket a trial. There is almost room for two of you in it – so if you don't want it to be noticeable, put it on under your own coat, and see how things go. And last, remember this, my boy; whatever happens, I shall still be keeping an eye on you. As my dear mother used to say, "There may be more than one way home, Sandy – but it's trudging does it." And here's good luck; God bless you; and *Fins*.'

★

It was the last page of Admiral Rumbold's 'yarn'. Mike turned it over, looked at the back, coughed, and drank down what was left of his cold cocoa. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and looked up as he did so at the round yellow face of the clock that hung on the wall at the further end of the shop. At that very moment, it seemed, it had begun to tick. The long hand stood at two minutes before the hour. The old gentleman must be expecting him now – this very minute! Had he meant him to open the parcel and put on the jacket inside it there and then? His face flushed, then paled – he couldn't make up his mind. His head was in a whirl, his heart thumping under his ribs; he broke out hot and damp all over.

While he was still debating what he should do, he noticed that the man who had brought him the food – with his long tallow-coloured face and pale grey eyes – was steadily though vacantly watching him. Mike got up in haste, pushed the remnants of his last doorstep of beef and bacon into his pocket, hastily snatched up the Admiral's manuscript and brown-paper parcel, and left the eating-house.

Before actually turning the corner which would bring him in sight of his pitch, he peeped round to see if the old gentleman was anywhere to be seen. He certainly was. At this actual moment he was walking away from Mike – square compact shoulders, brown billycock hat, and firm rolling tread. When once more he returned to the pictures he paused, looked them over one by one, dropped something into the cap, and continued on his way. In less than a minute or so he was back again, had taken another look, and once more paid his fee.

It appeared as if Admiral Rumbold had been so engaged ever since he had left Mike in the coffee-shop, and there could be no doubt he had by this means attracted passers-by to follow his example and look at the pictures. Many, it is true, just glanced and passed on, but a few paid their coppers. The old gentleman was now approaching the street corner where Mike was in hiding, so Mike stepped out a little shamefacedly, and met him there and then.

'Aha!' cried Admiral Rumbold. 'So there you are! Good! And sharp to time. Did you finish it? Good! Have you got it on?'

Mike went red, then white. He said 'I have read it, every page, sir, but the jacket's still in the paper, because –'

'Be dashed to "Because"!' cried the Admiral. 'Come a

pace or two down that alley yonder. We'll soon put that right'

So they went off together into the shelter of an alley near by, above which the green leaves of a plane tree showed over the glass-bottled wall; and Mike, having taken off his own old loose long coat, slipped into the Chinese jacket as easily as an eel, and then back into his own again on top of it. Admiral Rumbold, having crushed up the brown paper into a ball, tied the string round it, and lightly flung it over the wall. 'Good luck to it!' said he.

'Now,' he added, and looked at Mike – then paused. The boy stood motionless, as though he were frozen, yet he was trembling. His lips were moving. He seemed to be trying to say something for which he could not find the words. When at last he lifted his face and looked up, the old Admiral was astonished at the black-blue of his eyes in his pale face. It was the dark dazzling blue of deep seas. The Admiral could not for the life of him remember where he had seen eyes resembling them. They were unlike the eyes of boy or man or child or woman, and yet *somewhere* he had seen their like. Mike was smiling.

'The green crocodiles, sir,' he said, fingering one of the buttons 'Most of them are not much bigger than ha'pennies, but you can feel all the horny parts, and even the eyes stickin' out of their heads.'

'Ay, ay,' said the Admiral. 'That's Chinese work. That's how *they* work – at least in times gone by. But how do you feel, how do you *feel*, my lad?'

Mike gazed up an instant at his old friend; then his glance roved on and upward towards the pale-green pentagonal plane leaves above his head and the patch of blue and sunny sky beyond. A smart north-west breeze was blowing, and

a mountainous cloud was moving up into the heights of noonday

'I'd like,' he answered huskily, 'to get back to the pitchers, sir'

'Ay, ay!' cried the Admiral And again, 'Ay, ay! Back we go' So the two of them set off together

And though to all outward appearance the old gentleman, whose face was all but as red as a pimento, was as cool as a cucumber when he came stumping along beside his young acquaintance, his excitement was intense It was Mike who had now taken the lead The Admiral was merely following in his wake. The boy seemed utterly changed, made over again There was a look to him even as he walked that was as lively as a peal of bells It was as if his bright and burning sun had suddenly shone out between clouds as cold as granite, lighting up the heavens What was to happen next?

First, Mike took up his cap, and with not even a glance at what was inside it, emptied its contents into his coat pocket. He then paced slowly on from one picture to the next, until he had scrutinized the complete seven From the pocket with the remains of the 'doorstep' in it he then drew out his capacious strip of rag and hurried off to a dribbling water standard with a leopard's head on the spout about twenty-five yards away There he wetted his rag through and through He came back to his pictures, and in a few moments had completely rubbed every one of them out. No more than the faintest blur of pink and yellow was left to show that the paving-stones had ever lost their usual grey, and in three minutes that was dowsed out too

When he had finished this destruction, and the warm morning air had dried the stones again, he knelt down and

set to work. He seemed to have forgotten the old Admiral, the Chinese jacket, everything that had happened that morning. He seemed to be wholly unaware of the passers-by, the dappling sunbeams, the clatter and stir of the street, and even who and where and what he was. Skinny and engrossed, he squatted on his hams there, huddled up under the wall, and *worked*.

Admiral Rumbold, as he watched him, became almost alarmed at the rapidity with which things were taking shape on the blank paving-stones. As if by magic and before his very eyes there had loomed into view a full-rigged ship, swimming buoyant as a swan on the blue of its waters, its masts tapering up into the heavens, its sails bellying like drifts of snow; while from its portholes pushed the metal mouths of such dogs as he himself had often heard bark, and seldom to no purpose.

It was not so much the resemblance of this picture to a real ship on a real sea under a real sky that drew out of his mouth a grunted, 'Begad, begad!' but something in the look of the thing, some spirit living and lovely and everlasting behind it all, to which he could not have given name, but which reminded him of the eyes that had looked up at him a few minutes before under the plane leaves in the alley after their first intense glance at the crocodile buttons. Yes, and reminded him too of an evening long ago when he had made the circuit of his mother's mahogany dining-table on little more of his anatomy than his thumbs.

By this time a few other wayfarers had begun to collect and to watch the young street artist at his work. It did not seem to matter that he had forgotten to put back his cap in its customary place, that in fact it was on his head, for, oddly enough, when these idlers turned away, though

every single one of them seemed to marvel at the quickness and skill of the boy, yet they all seemed *anxious* to be gone, and nobody gave him a ha'penny

Admiral Rumbold could stand the strain no longer. He firmly placed a half-crown beside the little heap of coloured chalks, coughed loudly, paused an instant, and then, seeing that Mike had not noticed him, stole off and left him to his work.

The worst of the Admiral's anxieties were over. There could be no doubt in the world that the magic jacket had lost not one whit of its powers since first he had slipped into it himself all but sixty years ago. The only thing that troubled him was that not a single farthing had been bestowed on the young artist in the last quarter of an hour. Nevertheless, he thought he knew why

'They're scared!' he muttered to himself. 'They don't know what to make of it. They see it's a marvel and a miracle – and beyond 'em. They don't like the smell of it. They think it's dangerous. They just watch and wonder and sneak away. Well, my dear Rumbold, why *not*? Have patience. Never mind that. Wait and see!'

He loaded himself up with coppers the next morning, and returned very early to the narrow terrace behind Great St Ann's. The night before had been rainless, only the lightest of dews had fallen. It had been windless, too, and there was a moon, so that the row of pictures which Mike had left unfinished on the pavement must have faintly bloomed under her beams that whole night long, and now were as fresh as they were at the first making of them. Admiral Rumbold had sallied out at this unusual hour to steal a glance at them alone, but Mike had been up before him.

There he was – on his knees once more – deaf and blind

it seemed to everything in the world outside him, and intent only on his pictures. His old friend didn't interrupt him, but left him to himself, and went off to get some breakfast at his club. When he returned the boy had vanished for the time being. Five pictures out of the customary seven were now complete.

The Admiral stared and stared at them, part in astonishment, part in inexpressible delight, and part in the utmost dismay. Two of them – the ship, 'The Old Victory' and the new 'Hornted' – were more vivid and astonishing things than (with French chalks and paving-stones) he had thought even possible. The rest he felt uneasily were beyond his comprehension. He could hardly make head or tail of them.

One was called 'Peepul at Sunset'. It reminded him of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego walking in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Another was called 'The Blind Man'; it showed a chair, a table with a bowl of flowers, and a dish of fruit on it. There was an open window, too. It seemed to shimmer and glow and blaze like precious stones. But to the Admiral's eye the chair was all clumped and crooked, and the flowers looked queer – half human. He had never in all his born days seen a picture of a chair like that. Besides, there was not even a sign of a human being, let alone a blind man, to be seen! He stirred, coughed softly. He sighed; and glanced into the ragged cap. It was now a quarter to ten; the cap contained a French penny, a British ha'penny, and a three-penny bit with a hole in it. The Admiral lugged out of his pocket a handful of coppers, and added them to what was there. Off and on throughout the day he kept an eye on the young street artist. Of two things he was at last certain: first, that

Mike was still wearing the jacket, and next, that he had made (apart from his own donations) practically no profit. For you cannot pick up coloured chalks in the gutter, or patch the knees of your old breeches with the empty air! The boy could hardly have taken an independent sixpence.

Admiral Rumbold began to be a little anxious as he thought this dark fact over, but decided not to interfere. Next day he knocked fairly early at the door of a lodging-house nearly opposite Mike's pitch.

'Good morning,' he said, as soon as it was opened. 'I'd like, if you please, to have the window again. Is it free?'

'Certainly, sir,' said the woman who had answered his knock. 'I'm glad you enjoy the view, sir. It's a pity there's so much wall.'

'It's not the bricks, ma'am, but the people,' replied the Admiral, as he followed her up a flight of stairs into a room which immediately overlooked the street.

There – behind the Brussels curtains at the window, and seated on a rather lumpy armchair – the Admiral spent most of his morning, watching all that went on in the street below, but especially the boy. And once more he came to two conclusions: first, that Mike was *not* now wearing the jacket, and next that he was making less money even than the day before. *Life* seemed to be gone out of him. He sat hunched up beside his chalks and his empty cap – his bony face as grey as ashes. He hardly dared even raise his eyes when anybody paused to examine his pictures. Now and again, however, he would glance anxiously up and down the street as if in search of somebody.

'He's looking for me,' muttered the Admiral to himself.

'He wants to return the jacket. God bless *me*! Still, steady does it; steady does it'

He returned to his window in the early afternoon. The boy looked even more miserable and dejected than ever, but none the less he had begun to tinker a bit at his picture, 'The Old Victory'. On this occasion the Admiral had brought field-glasses with him. With these he could now watch his young friend at work so closely as almost to fancy he could hear him breathe. Indeed, he could see even a round-headed ant making its way along the crack between two paving-stones; and the tiny bits of chalk resembled coloured rocks.

Mike laboured on, now rubbing out, now chalking in, and the Admiral could follow every tint and line and stroke. At last – though by no means as if he were satisfied – the boy stood up and examined what he had done. At sight of it he seemed to droop and shrink. And no wonder. The Admiral almost wept aloud. The thing was ruined. There was the ship, there the sea, and there the sky, but where the lovely light and airiness, the romance, the wonder? Where the *picture*?

Admiral Rumbold was at his wits' end. The day was drawing on. He began to think that his intended kindness had ruined the boy for good and all. He sat back in his chair absolutely at a loss what to do next. One thing was certain. He must go soon and have a word with the boy – hearten and liven him up. He must give him a good square meal, put some 'beef' into him, and – perhaps – take the jacket back. It had been little but a deceit and a failure. He must take the jacket back, then think things over.

He leant forward to rise from his chair, and as he did so cast a last desperate glance at the opposite side of the street

Then he paused. Fine weather was still in the heavens. The first colours of evening were beginning to stretch across London's skies - shafts of primrose, melted gold, and faint crimson lighting up the walls of the houses, flooding the streets with light. And Mike was no longer alone. He was still squatting tailor-fashion under his wall and as motionless as if he had been carved out of ebony, but a pace or so away stood an odd-looking old gentleman in a sort of long curry-coloured ulster. This old gentleman had a beard and wore a high conical black felt hat with a wide rim to it. An umbrella, less neat but more formidable in appearance even than the Admiral's, was tucked under his arm.

He was not merely looking at, he was intent on, 'lost' in the pictures. He stood over them each in turn, spending at least two or three minutes over every one, except 'The Old Victory', at which he just glanced and went on.

When he found himself at the end of the row, he turned back and examined them all over again. Admiral Rumbold watched these proceedings with bated breath. The old man in the ulster had now turned to Mike, who at once scrambled to his feet, leaving his chinks, his cap, and a small newspaper parcel on the pavement. The two of them in the clear-coloured evening light were soon talking together almost as if they were father and son. They were talking about the pictures, too, for every now and again Mike's new acquaintance, bent almost double, would point with the stump of his umbrella at one of them, tracing out a line, or hovering over a patch of colour. At the same time, his beard turned over his shoulder towards Mike, he would seem to be praising or criticizing or explaining, or asking questions. Once, indeed, he stopped, caught up a piece of chalk, and himself drew a few lines on the pavement as if to show the

boy exactly what he meant. 'So!' the Admiral heard him end, brushing his fingers.

There could be no doubt this eccentric old gentleman in the wide black hat was interested not only in the pictures but also in Mike. He looked as if in his excitement he might go on talking till midnight. But no; at this very moment he seemed to be making some kind of proposal to the boy. He had put his hand on his shoulder as if in encouragement. Mike hesitated; then cast a long look into the sky, as if to consult the weather. After that his mind seemed to be made up. He hastily took up his cap, his chalks, and his parcel, and the two of them set off down Little St Ann's together.

At this Admiral Rumbold paused no longer. He seized his hard billycock hat, his field-glasses and his malacca cane, and clattered down the stairs out into the street. Keeping well behind them, he followed Mike and the old gentleman out of Little St Ann's into Ashley Court, and so across into Jermyn Street. At this corner, so intent was he in his pursuit, that he barely escaped being run over by a two-horse grocery van.

Mike and the old gentleman were now so clearly in sight that the Admiral had time to pause and address a policeman.

'Good evening, constable,' he said. 'I want you to tell me if by any chance you happen to know the name of that old gentleman in the hat yonder, walking with that lad there?'

'The policeman fixed his eyes on the pair.

'Well, sir, to tell you the truth, sir,' he said at last, 'I've seen him somewhere though I couldn't say rightly just where. I've even been told who he is. But bless me, if I can lay tongue to the name of him. I wish I could, sir. He looks

as if it might be worth while ' Admiral Rumbold thanked the policeman and hastened on

At the moment when he once more came within sight of the two of them a long-haired youngish young man in a dark, loose cape or cloak had but just met and passed them by This young man was also wearing a black wide-brimmed hat As soon as politeness permitted, he not only stopped dead, but stood intently watching the pair until Admiral Rumbold himself had come up with him. The Admiral glanced him over

'You will excuse me, sir,' he said, 'but if I am not mistaken, you are as much interested in that old gentleman yonder as I am myself A most impressive figure! Could you oblige me with his name?'

'His *name*, sir!' exclaimed the young man 'Gracious heavens! why, that's old B— That's "old B in a Bonnet"! — the crankiest, craziest old creature in the British Isles But make no mistake, sir What that old boy doesn't know about pictures and painting isn't worth a tallow candle He's a Master Wait till he's dead, that's all Then the whole world will be wagging with him'

'You don't say *so*!' shouted the Admiral 'A *Master! Painting!* — eh? I am very greatly obliged to 'ee — very greatly obliged And you think if he's taken a fancy to that lad there — *sees* promise in him, I mean — well — that the lad's in luck's way?'

'"Think?"' replied the young man. 'Bless your heart, sir, I *know*'

The Admiral detained him no longer He saluted him and passed on He could say no more He was satisfied All was well The magic jacket, then, had *not* played him false. Mike's 'steepish bit of hill' was well begun He found himself

at the further end of Jermyn Street, and in the traffic of the Haymarket. The old man in the ulster had disappeared. But no, there he was – old B. – some little distance down on the opposite side of the street, and at the window of a print-seller's shop. He was talking to the boy at his side – pointing, gesticulating, his bushy beard wagging. And Mike was listening, gazing in, entranced. Admiral Rumbold turned on his heel. He had never professed to know much about pictures. Then why should he now suddenly feel downcast and depressed? He was tired, too, and extremely thirsty. It was almost as if he missed his jacket.



Up and Down

Down the Hill of Ludgate,
Up the Hill of Fleet,
To and fro and East and West
With people flows the street,
Even the King of England
On Temple Bar must beat
For leave to ride to Ludgate
Down the Hill of Fleet.

'Please to Remember'

Here am I,
A poor old Guy:
Legs in a bonfire,
Head in the sky,

Shoeless my toes,
Wild stars behind,
Smoke in my nose,
And my eye-peeps blind;

Old hat, old straw –
In this disgrace;
While the wildfire gleams
On a mask for face.

Ay, all I am made of
Only trash is;
And soon – soon,
Will be dust and ashes.

Unstooping

Low on his fours the Lion
Treads with the surly Bear,
But Men straight upward from the dust
Walk with their heads in air,
The free sweet winds of heaven,
The sunlight from on high
Beat on their clear bright cheeks and brows
As they go striding by,
The doors of all their houses
They arch so they may go,
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,
Unstooping, to and fro

Hi!

Hi! handsome hunting man,
Fire your little gun.
Bang! Now the animal
Is dead and dumb and done
Nevermore to peep again, creep again, leap again,
Eat or sleep or drink again Oh, what fun!

Then as Now

Then as Now; and Now as Then,
Spins on this World of Men
White – Black – Yellow – Red:
They wake, work, eat, play, go to bed.
Black – Yellow – Red – White.
They talk, laugh, weep, dance, morn to night.
Yellow – Red – White – Black:
Sun shines, moon rides, clouds come back.
Red – White – Black – Yellow:
Count your hardest, who could tell o'
The myriads that have come and gone,
Stayed their stay this earth upon,
And vanished then, their labour done?
Sands of the wilderness, stars in heaven,
Solomon could not sum them even;
Then as Now, Now as Then
Still spins on this World of Men.

Mima

Jemima is my name,
But oh, I have another,
My father always calls me Meg,
And so do Bob and mother,
Only my sister, jealous of
The strands of my bright hair,
'Jemima - Mima - Mima !'
Calls, mocking, up the stair



Dick and the Beanstalk

In the county of Gloucestershire there lived with his father, who was a farmer, a boy called Dick. Their farm was not one of the biggest of the Gloucestershire farms thereabouts. It was of the middle size, between large and small. But the old house had stood there, quiet and peaceful, for at least two hundred years, and it was built of sound Cotswold stone. It had fine chimney stacks and a great roof. From his window under one of its gables Dick looked out across its ploughland and meadows to distant hills, while nearer at hand its barns, stables, and pigsties clustered around it, like chicks round a hen.

Dick was an only son and had no mother. His father – chiefly for company's sake – had never sent him to school. But being a boy pretty quick in his wits, Dick had all but taught himself, with his father's help, to read and write and figure a little. And, by keeping his eyes and his ears open wherever he went, by asking questions and, if need be, finding out the answers for himself, he had learned a good deal else besides.

When he was a child he had been sung all the old rhymes and told most of the country tales of those parts by his mother, and by an old woman who came to the farm when there was sewing to be done, sheets to be hemmed, or shirts to be made. She was a deaf, poring old woman, but very skilful with her needle; and he never wearied of listening to the tales she told him; though at times, and particularly on dark windy nights in the winter, he would at last creep off rather anxious and shuddering to bed.

These tales not only stayed in Dick's head, but *lived* there. He not only remembered them, but thought about them;

and he sometimes dreamed about them. He not only knew almost by heart what they told, but would please himself by fancying what else had happened to the people in them after the tales were over or before they had begun. He could not only find his way about in a story-book, chapter by chapter, page by page, but if it told only about the inside of a house he would begin to wonder what its garden was like – and in imagination would find his way out into it and then perhaps try to explore even further. It was in this way, for example, that Dick had come to his own conclusions on which finger Aladdin wore his ring, and the colour of his uncle the Magician's eyes, on what too at last had happened to the old Fairy Woman in *The Sleeping Beauty*. After, that is, she had ridden off on her white ass into the forest when the magic spindle had begun to spread the deathly slumber over her enemies that was not to be broken for a hundred years. He knew why she didn't afterwards come to the Wedding!

And as for Blue-beard's stone-turreted and many-windowed castle, with its chestnut gallery to the east, and its muddy moat with its carp, under the cypresses, Dick knew a good deal more about *that* than ever Fatima did! So again, if he found out that Old Mother Hubbard had a *cat*, he could tell you the cat's name. And he could describe the crown that Molly Whuppie was crowned with when she became Queen, even to its last emerald. He was what is called a *lively* reader.

Dick often wished he had been born the youngest of three brothers, for then he would have gone out into the world early to seek his fortune. And in a few years, and after many adventures, he would have come back again, his pockets crammed with money, a magic Table on his back or a Cap

of Invisibility in his pocket, and have lived happily with his father ever afterwards. He had long been certain too that if only he could spruce up his courage and be off if but a little way, even if only into one of the next counties, Warwickshire or Wiltshire, Monmouthshire or Somerset, adventures would be sure to come. He itched to try his luck.

But there was a hindrance. His father would hardly let him out of his sight. And this was natural. Poor man, he had no daughters, so Dick was his only child as well as his only son. And his mother was dead. Apart then from his farm, the farmer had but one thought in the world – Dick himself. Still, he would at times give him leave to jog off alone to the nearest market town on an errand or two. And going alone for Dick was not the same thing as *not* going alone.

Sometimes Dick went further. He had an uncle, a very fat man, who was a mason at Moreton-in-the-Marsh, and an old widowed aunt who had a windmill and seven cats at Stow-on-the-Wold. He would visit *them*. He had also been to the Saffron Fair at Cirencester, and had stayed till the lights came out and the flares of the gingerbread stalls and Merry-go-rounds. But as for the great cities of Gloucestershire – Gloucester itself, or Bristol, or further still, Exeter, or further the other way, London (where his old friend and namesake Dick Whittington had been Lord Mayor three-and-a-half times) – Dick had never walked the streets of any of them, except in his story-books or in dreams. However, those who wait long enough seldom wait in vain.

On his next birthday after the one on which he had gone to the Saffron Fair, his father bought him for a birthday present a rough-coated pony. It was hog-maned – short and bristly; it was docktailed, stood about eleven hands high,

and was called Jock. His father gave Dick leave to ride about the country when his morning's work was done, 'just to see the world a bit', as he said, and to learn to fend for himself. And it was a bargain and promise between them that unless any mischance or uncommon piece of good fortune should keep him late, Dick would always be home again before night came down. Great talks of the afternoon's and evening's doings the two of them would have over their supper together in the farmhouse kitchen. His father began to look forward to them as much as Dick looked forward to them himself. Very good friends they were together, Dick and his father.

Now one winter morning - in the middle of January - of the next year, Dick asked leave of his father to have the next whole fine day all to himself. The weather had been frosty, the evening skies a fine shepherd's red, and everything promised well. He told his father he wanted to press on further afield than he had before - 'beyond those hills over there'. And as the days were now short, he must be off early, since there were few hours after noon before dark. His father gave him leave, but warned him to be careful of what company he got into and against any folly or foolhardiness. 'Don't run into mischief, my son,' he said, 'nor let mischief run into you!' Dick laughed and promised.

Next day, before dawn, while still the stars were shining, he got up, put on his clothes, crept downstairs, ate a hurried breakfast and cut himself off a hunch of bread and meat in the larder to put in his pocket. Then he scribbled a few lines to his father to tell him that he had gone, pinned the paper to the kitchen table and having saddled up his pony set out due north-west into the morning.

There had been a very sharp frost during the night. It was

as though a gigantic miller had stalked over the fields scattering his meal as he went. The farm ruts were hard and sharp as stone, and as they jogged along, Jock's hoofs splintered the frozen puddles lying between them as if they were fine thin glass. Soon the sun rose, clear as a furnace, though with so little heat yet that its beams were not strong even to melt the rime that lay in the hollows and under the woods.

Now on the Friday before this, Dick had come to a valley between two round hills, and had looked out beyond it. But it had been too late in the day to go further. He reached this valley again about ten o'clock of the morning, and pushed on, trotting steadily along between its wooded slopes, following a faint overgrown grass-track until at last the track died away, and he came out on the other side. Here was much emptier, flatter country, though not many miles distant snow-topped hills began again. These hills were strange to him, and he had no notion where he was.

The unploughed fields were larger here than any he was accustomed to, and were overgrown with weeds. In these a multitude of winter birds were feeding. The hedges were ragged and untended, and there was not a house to be seen. Dick got off Jock's back and took out his lunch. Uncommonly good it tasted in the sharp cold air. And as he ate - sitting on a green knoll in the thin pale sunshine - he looked about him. And he saw a long way off what at first sight he took to be a column of smoke mounting up into the sky. He watched it awhile, marvelling. But there was no show of fire or of motion in it. It hung still and glimmering between the frosty earth and the blue of space. If not smoke, what could it be? Dick pondered in vain.

Having hastily finished his bread and meat, and feeling much the better for it, he mounted again and set off as fast as Jock could carry him in its direction. About three o'clock in the afternoon he drew near. And he found himself at last in a hollow where was an old tumbledown cottage, its thatch broken, its chimney fallen, its garden run wild. And growing within a few paces of this old cottage – towering up high above it, its top beyond view – was a huge withered tangle of what looked like a coarse kind of withy-wind or creeper. It went twisting and writhing corkscrew fashion straight up into the air and so out of sight. Dick could not guess how far, because the sunlight so dazzled his eyes. But when he examined this great growth closely, and its gigantic pods of dried-up seeds as big as large kidney-shaped pebble-stones that still clung to its stem, he decided that it must be beans.

Never had he seen anything to match these beans. Who could have planted them, and when, and for what purpose? And where was he gone to? And then, in a flash, Dick realized at last where he himself *was*, and what he was looking at. There could be no doubt in the world. This was Jack's old cottage. This was where Jack had lived with his mother – before he met the friendly butcher on his way to market. And this huge tangled ladder here – which must have sprung up again as mighty as ever after Jack had cut it down and the Giant had fallen headlong – was Jack's famous Beanstalk.

Poor old woman, thought Dick. Jack's mother must be dead and gone ages and ages ago. And Jack too. He spied through the broken wall where a window had been. The hearth was full of old nettles. The thatch was riddled with abandoned bird-nests and rat-holes. There was not a sound

in earth or sky, nor any trace of human being. He sat down on a hummock in the sun not far from the walls, and once more gazed up at the Beanstalk, and down again, and in his mind Dick went through all Jack's strange adventures. He knew them by heart.

The turf at his foot had been nibbled close by rabbits. His seat, though smooth, was freckled with tiny holes, and it rounded up out of the turf like a huge grey stone. Near at hand, ivy and bramble had grown over it, but there showed another smaller hummock in the turf about three or four paces away. And as he eyed it he suddenly realized that he must be sitting on the big knuckle end of one of Jack's Giant's larger bones, probably his thigh bone, now partly sunken and buried and hidden in the ground. At thought of this he sprang to his feet again, and glanced sharply about him. Where, he wondered, lay the Giant's skull? Then he took another long look at the vast faded Beanstalk, and another at the bone. It was still early afternoon, but it was winter, and at about four o'clock, he reckoned, the sun would be set.

The more Dick looked at the Beanstalk, the more he itched to climb it – even if he got only as high as the cottage chimney. Farther up, much farther up, he would be able to see for miles. And still farther, he might even, if his sight carried, catch a glimpse of Old Bowley – a lofty hill which on days when rain was coming he could see from his bedroom window.

And he began arguing with himself. 'Now, surely, my father would never forgive me if he heard that I had actually discovered Jack's Beanstalk, and had come away again without daring to climb an inch of it!' And his other self answered him. 'Ay, that's all very well, my friend! But an

ch, if it bears you, will be as good as a mile What of *that?*

What of *that?* thought Dick. He went close and tugged with all his might at the tangle of stalks. A few hollow cockled-up bean seeds peppered down from out of their dry shucks. He ducked his head. Once more he tugged, the stalks were tough as leather. And he began to climb.

But he made slow progress. The harsh withered strands of the bean-bines not only cut into his hands but were crusted over with rime, and his hands and feet were soon numb with cold. He stayed breathless and panting, not venturing yet to look down. On he went, and after perhaps a full hour's steady climbing, he stayed again and gazed about him. And a marvellous scene now met his eyes. His head swam with the strangeness of it.

Low in the heavens hung the red globe of the sun, and beneath him lay the vast saucer of the world. And there, sure enough, was Old Bowley! Jack's cottage seemingly no bigger than a doll's house showed plump under his feet. And an inch or so away from it stood Jock no bigger than a mole, cropping the grass in Jack's mother's garden.

Having come so high, Dick could not resist climbing higher. So on he went. Bruised with the beans that continually rattled down on him, breathless and smoking hot though powdered white with hoarfrost, at last he reached the top of the Beanstalk. There he sat down to rest. He found himself in a country of low, smooth, but very wide hills and of wide gentle valleys. Here too a thin snow had fallen. In this clear blue light it looked much more like the strange kind of place he had sometimes explored in his dreams than anything he had ever seen down below. And, far, far to the north, rising dark and lowering in the

distance above the blur and pallor of the snow, showed the turrets of a Castle Dick watched that Castle, and the longer he watched it, the less he liked the look of it.

Still, where Jack had led, Dick soon decided to follow. And best be quick! Thinking no more whether or not he would be able to get home that night, and believing his father would forgive him for not this time keeping to the bargain between them, since it was certain Dick would have plenty to tell him in the morning, he set off towards the Castle as fast as he could trudge. The frozen snow was scarcely an inch deep, but it was numbing cold up here in this high country; and the crystals being dry and powdery he could not get along fast.

Indeed, Dick did not reach the great Castle's gates under their cavernous, echoing, stone archway until a three-quarters moon had risen bright behind him. It shone with a dazzling lustre over the snow – on the square-headed iron nails in the gates, and on the grim bare walls of the Castle itself. A rusty bell-chain hung high over his head beside the gates. Dick stood there eyeing it, his heart thumping against his ribs as it had never thumped before. But having come so far he was ashamed to turn back. He gave a jump, clutched at the iron handle with both hands, and tugged with all his might.

He heard nothing, not a sound. But in a few minutes – and slow they seemed – a wicket that had been cut out of the timbers of the huge gate, turned on its hinges, and a leaden-faced woman, her head and shoulders muffled up in a shawl, and, to Dick's astonishment, only about nine feet high, looked out on him and asked him what he wanted.

Following Jack's example, Dick told her that he had lost

way - as indeed he had, though he had found Jack's! He
and he was tired out and hungry, and afraid of perishing
the cold. He implored the woman to give him a drink of
water and a crust of bread, and perhaps to let him warm
himself if only for a few minutes by her fire. 'Else, ma'am,'
said, 'the only thing I can do is to lie down under the
all here and maybe die. I can go no further.'

Not the faintest change showed in the woman's long
narrow bony face. She merely continued to peer down at
him. Then she asked him his name. Dick told her his name,
and at that her eyes sharpened as if she had expected it.

'Step out there into the moonlight a little,' she told him,
'so that I can see your face. So it's Dick, is it?' she repeated
after him. '"Dick"! And you have come begging, eh? I
have heard that tale before. And how, pray, am I to tell that
you aren't from the same place, wherever that may be, as
that villainous Jack who came here years and years and years
ago with just such a tale as you have told me, and then ran
off, first with my great-grandfather's moneybags, then
with his Little Hen, and last with his Harp? How am I to
know that? Why! - from what I've heard - you look to
me as like as two peas!'

Dick stared up in wonder into her face. Jack's Giant, he
thought, could not have been nearly so far back as the story
had made out if this woman was only his great-grand-
daughter. He himself would have guessed a round dozen of
greats at least. It was a mystery.

'Jack?' he said, as if he were puzzled. 'And who was Jack,
ma'am? There are so many Jacks where I come from. No-
body of mine. What became of him, then?'

'Ah,' said the woman, 'you may well ask that. If my
great-grandfather had caught him he would have ground

his bones to powder in his mortar, and made soup of what was left. He was in the flower of his age, was my great-grandfather then, but he never came back. Never. And a kinder gentler soul never walked! "*And who was JACK,*" says he!" she muttered to herself, and Dick little liked the sound of it.

'Well, I wonder!' said he, wishing he could hide his face from the glare of the moon. 'I mean, I wonder if your great-grandfather ever found his Harp again. Or his Little Hen either. There are plenty of hens where I come from. And harps too, as I have heard. It sounds a dreadful story, I mean, but what could that bad boy you mention have wanted with a harp?'

'Ay,' said the leaden-faced woman, blinking once but no more as she stared at him. 'What?'

'Anyhow,' said Dick, 'that must have been more years ago than I could count. And if I *were* Jack, ma'am, or even his great-grandson either, I couldn't be the size I am now. I should have grown a grey beard as long as your arm, and be dead and done with long ago. I am sorry about your great-grandfather. It is a sad story. And I don't know *what* end that Jack mustn't have come to. But if you would give me only a sip of water and a bit of bread and a warm by the fire, I wouldn't ask for *anything* more.'

'Nor did Jack, so they say,' said the woman sourly; and looked him over, top to toe again.

But she led him in none the less through the great gates of the Castle and down into the kitchen, where a fire was burning on the hearth. This kitchen, Dick reckoned, was about the size of (but not much bigger than) a little church. It was warm and cosy after the dark and cold. A shaded lamp stood burning on the table, and there were pewter

candlesticks three feet high for fat tallow candles on the dresser Dick looked covertly about him, while he stood warming his hands a few paces from the huge open hearth. Here, beside him, was the very cupboard in which in terror Jack had hidden himself. The shut oven door was like the door of a dungeon. Through a stone archway to the right of him he could spy out the copper. A chair stood beside the table. And on the table, as if waiting for somebody, was a tub-sized soup tureen. There was a bowl beside it, and a spoon to fit. And next the spoon was a hunch of bread of about the size of a quartern loaf. Even though he stood at some distance, it was only by craning his neck that Dick could spy out what was on the table.

He looked at all this with astonished eyes. He had fancied Jack's Giant's kitchen was a darker and gloomier place. But in Jack's day there was perhaps a fire less fierce burning in the hearth and no lamp alight, perhaps too in summer the shadows of the Castle walls hung coldly over its windows. Not that he felt very comfortable himself. Now that he had managed to get into the Castle, he began to be anxious as to what might happen to him before he could get out again. The ways and looks of this woman were not at all to his fancy and whoever was going to sup at that table might look even worse!

She had taken off her shawl now, and after rummaging in a high green cupboard had come back with a common-sized platter and an earthenware mug – mere dolls' china by comparison with the tureen on the table. She filled the mug with milk.

'Now get you up on that stool,' she said to Dick, bringing the mug and a platter of bread over to him. 'Sit you up there and eat and drink and warm yourself while you

dark eyes went arch-shaped as she said it, 'perhaps if you find it, you shall learn to play a tune on his Harp!'

Dick, as has been said, liked neither the looks nor the sound of this woman. She was, he decided, as sly and perhaps as treacherous as a fox. 'I can show you where I came from easily enough,' he answered. 'But I know no more about Jack than I have - than I have heard'

'Nor don't we,' said the woman. 'Well, well, well! When he has supped you shall take my husband the way you came, and we shall see what we *shall* see.'

Dick glanced at the giant, who all this while had been glinting at him out of his wide and almost colourless eyes. So, not knowing whether he followed his great-grandfather's habits, or how long his wife would remain with them, he thought it best to say no more. He smiled, first at one of them, and then at the other, took a sip of milk, and rank greasy goat's milk it was, and said, 'When you are ready, I am ready too' The difficulty was to keep his tongue from showing how fast his heart was beating.

At this the giant sat down to table and began the supper his wife had prepared for him. Spoon in hand he noisily supped up his huge basin of soup, picking out gingerly with his fingers, and as greedily as a starling, the hot steaming lumps of meat in it. He ate like a grampus. His soup finished, he fell to work on what looked like a shepherd's pie that had been sizzling in the oven. Then having sliced off a great lump of greenish cheese, he washed it all down with what was in his mug. But whether wine, ale, cider, or water, Dick could not tell.

Having eaten his fill, the young giant sat back in his chair, as if to think his supper over. And soon he fell asleep. Not so did the woman. She had seated herself on the other side

of the hearth in a great rocking-chair, a good deal closer to him than Dick fancied, and she had begun to knit. Like the clanking of fireirons her needles sounded on and on in the kitchen, while the young giant, his mouth wide open, now and again shuddered in his slumbers or began or ceased to snore. Whereas if Dick even so much as opened his mouth to yawn, or shifted his legs out of the blaze of the fire, the woman's slow heavy face turned round on him, and stared at him as if she had been made of stone.

At last, much to Dick's comfort, the young giant awoke and stretched himself. He seemed to be in a good humour after his nap, and not sulky or sharp as some people are. 'What I say,' he said with a laugh on seeing Dick again 'what I say is, there's more than one kind of supper!'

'Ha, ha, ha!' echoed Dick, but not very merrily. The giant then fumbled for a great club of blackthorn that stood behind the kitchen door. He put on his flat hat again, wound a scarf of sheep's wool round his neck, and said he was ready. Never had Dick, inside a book or out, heard before of a giant that wore a scarf. He clambered down from his stool and stood waiting. Her hand over her mouth, and her narrow sallow face showing less friendly than ever, the woman took another long look at him. Then she turned to her husband, and looked him over too.

'Well, it's a cold night,' she said, 'but you will soon get warm walking, and won't need your sheepskins.' At mention of *cold* her husband stepped back and lifted the curtain that concealed the kitchen window. He screened his eyes with his hands and looked out.

'Cold!' he said. 'It's perishing. There's a moon like a lump of silver, and a frost like iron. Besides,' he grumbled 'a nap's no sleep, and I don't stir a step until the morning.'

can. My husband will be home at any moment. Then you can tell him who you are, what you want, why you have come, and where from.'

Dick quaked in his shoes – not so much at the words, as at the woman's mouth when she said them. But he looked back at her as boldly as he dared, and climbed up on to the stool. There, clumsy mug in one hand and crust in the other, he set to on his bread and milk. It was pleasant enough, he thought to himself, to sit here in the warm eating his supper, though a scrape of butter would have helped. But what kind of dainty might not this woman's husband fancy for *his* when *he* came home!

So, as he sipped, he peeped about him for a way of escape. But except for the door that stood ajar, some great pots on the pot-board under the dresser, and a mouse's hole in the wainscot that was not much bigger than a fox's in a hedgerow, there was no crack or cranny to be seen. Besides, the woman was watching him as closely as a cat. And he decided that for the present it would be wiser to keep his eyes to himself, and to stay harmless where he was.

At last there came the sound of what Dick took for footsteps, from out of the back parts of the Castle. It was as if a man were pounding with a mallet on a tub. They came nearer. In a moment or two the kitchen door opened, and framed in the opening stood the woman's husband. Dick could not keep from squinting a little as he looked at him.

He guessed him to be about eighteen to twenty feet high – not more. Apart from this, he was not, thought Dick, what you could call a fine or large-sized giant. He was lean and bony; his loose unbuttoned leather jacket hung slack from his shoulders, and his legs in his stockings were no thicker than large scaffolding poles. There was a long nose

in his long pale face, and on either side of his flat hat dangled dingy straw-coloured hair, hanging down from the mop above it

When his glance fell on Dick enjoying himself on his stool by the kitchen fire, his watery green-grey eyes looked as if they might drop at any moment from out of his head

'Head and choker! what have we here, wife,' he said at last to the leaden-faced woman 'What have we here? *Hm, hm*'

Before she could answer, Dick spoke up as boldly as he knew how, and told the young giant (for though Dick could not be certain, he *looked* to be not above thirty) - he told the young giant how he had lost his way, and chancing on the withered Beanstalk had climbed to the top of it to have a look round him. He told him, too, how grieved he had been to hear that the woman's great-grandfather had never come back to the Castle after he had chased the boy called Jack away, and how much he wondered whether the Little Hen was buried, and what had become of the Harp. Dick went on talking because it was easier to do so than to keep silent, seeing that the two of them continued to stare at him, and in a far from friendly fashion

'I expect it played its last tune,' he ended up, 'ages and ages before I was born'

'Ay,' said the woman 'That's all pretty enough. But what I say is that unless the tale I have heard is all fable, this ugly imp here must be little short of the very spit of that wicked thief himself. Anywise, he looks to me as if he had come from the same place. What's more—' she turned on Dick - 'if you can tell us where that is, you shall take my husband there and show it him. And you can look for the grave of my great-grandfather. And perhaps,' and her thin

The two of them wrangled together for a while and Dick listened. But at last after drawing iron bars across the shutters and locking him in, leaving him nothing to make him comfortable, and only the flames of the fire for company, they left him – as Dick hoped, for good. But presently after, the woman came back again, dangling a chain in her hand.

‘So and so!’ she said, snapping together the ring at the end of it on his ankle. ‘There! That kept safe my old Poll parrot for many a year, so it may keep even *you* safe until day-break!’

She stooped to fix the other end of the chain round a leg of the great table. Then, ‘Take what sleep you can, young man,’ she said, ‘while you can, and as best you can. You’ll need all your wits in the morning.’

Her footsteps died away. But long afterwards Dick could hear the voices of the two of them, the giant and his wife, mumbling on out of the depths of the night overhead, though he himself had other things to think about. After striving in vain to free his leg from the ring of the chain, he examined as best he could with the help of his stool the locks and bolts of the shutters over the windows – stout oak or solid iron every one of them. He reckoned the walls of this kitchen must be twelve feet thick at least and the bolts were to match.

And while more and more anxiously he was still in search of a way out, he heard a sudden scuffling behind him, and a squeak as shrill as a bugle. He turned in a flash, and in the glow of the fire saw what he took to be a mouse that had come out of its hole, though it was an animal of shape, lean and dark, and half as large again as a English rat. Next moment, a score or more

creatures had crept out of the wainscot. They gambolled about on the kitchen floor, disporting themselves and looking for supper.

By good fortune, when the squeak sounded, Dick had been standing on his stool by the window. He held his breath at sight of them, and perhaps had held it too long, for the giant's pepper had got into his nose, for he suddenly sneezed. At which a jubilee indeed went up in the kitchen. And if, in spite of his chain, by a prodigious leap from the stool to the table he had not managed to land on it safely it might well have been the last of him. Luckily too, the margins of the table jutted out far beyond its legs, so that though the sharp-nosed hungry animals scrabbled up the legs in hopes to get him, they could climb no further.

Now and again, squatting there, through the long hours that followed – half-hidden between the giant's tureen and mug – Dick drowsed off, in spite of these greedy noisy rodents, and in spite too of the crickets in the outer cracks of the oven, which kept up a continuous din like a covey of willow-wrens. He was pestered also by the cunning and curiosity of a wakeful housefly, though others like it, straddling as big as cockroaches on the walls in the dusky light of the fire, remained asleep. It must be a fusty airless place, Dick thought, that had flies in winter. And so he passed a sorry night.

It was five by the clock when the giant and his wife came down again, Grackel still grumbling, and she pressing him to be gone. At last he was ready. She looked him up and down. 'What's to be done is best done quickly,' she said to him. 'You can get breakfast at a tavern maybe. And leave your aunt's watch behind you, husband. It will be safer at home.'

The giant sullenly did as his wife had bidden, drew out of his pocket a fine gold watch, its back embedded with what looked to Dick like sapphires and emeralds and other precious stones, and laid it on the table.

'That looks a fine watch,' said Dick, shivering in his breeches, for he was stiff and cold.

'Ay, so it is,' said the woman, and she put it away on a shelf in the cupboard. 'Now look you here, Grackel,' she added, when they had all three come together to the gates of the Castle, 'if you are not home before sundown the day after to-morrow, I shall send for your uncles, and they shall come and look for you.'

Dick raised his hat to the woman as he left her there by the Castle gates, but there was so much mistrust of him in her eye that he feigned he had done so only in order to scratch his head, and he couldn't manage even to say the Good-day that was in his mouth.

So he and the giant went off together into the snow, shining white in the light of the moon. The moon was still far from her setting. But they had not gone much above a mile – one of Dick's miles – before the giant began to be impatient at the slow pace he had to move in order that Dick might keep up with him, even though for every stride *he* took Dick trotted three. So at last he stooped down in the snow and told Dick to climb up over his back on to his shoulders. Up went Dick like a cat up a tree, clutched on to his coarse yellow hair, and away they went.

Perched up on high like this, a good twenty feet above the snow, and tossing along on Grackel's shoulders, the giant's great bony hand clutched round his knees, Dick thought he had never seen a more magical sight than these strange hills and valleys sparkling cold and still in the glare

of the moonlight No, not even in his dreams He might have been an Arab on the hump of his camel in the desert of Gobi

It was easy for the giant to find his way For though there were many prints of wild creatures and of long-clawed birds in the snow, Dick's footmarks were clearer than any Now and then they passed a great clump of trees - their bare twigs brushing the starry sky - which looked like enormous faggots of kindling wood And in less than a quarter of the time that Dick had spent on his journey to the Castle, they came to the top of the Beanstalk. And Dick shouted in the giant's ear that he wanted to be put down

'Here we are,' he shouted, when he was on his own feet again The giant in the last few minutes had been ambling on very warily as if he knew he was on dangerous ground As soon as Dick had stamped life into his legs again, he pointed to the huge tangle of frosty bine and withy that jutted high above the edge of the abyss 'See there!' he shouted at the top of his voice, in the sharp frosty air 'That's the Beanstalk. Down *there* is where I come from But I doubt if it will bear *you* '

He almost laughed out loud to see with what caution Grackel crept out on hands and knees to peer out over the brink at the world below But the giant could see nothing in the sombre shadow of the moon except the dried-up Beanstalk twisting and writhing down below into space 'Hm, hm,' he kept stupidly muttering

And Dick understood at last how it was that the Beanstalk had never been discovered before These giants, it seemed, were by nature a stupid race So scared was Grackel at last at sight of the abyss that his teeth began to chatter like millstones, and his face was as white as a sheet. Dick

is the way you should go I go this My father is expecting me and I must get home as soon as I can '

It was so he hoped to slip away. But Grackel was at least too crafty for that. He stood leaning his sharp elbows on the broken roof of the cottage, leering down at Dick so steadily that he was mortally afraid the giant might notice the bulge of his great-grandad's leg-bone in the rabbit-nibbled turf of the garden.

'No, no, my young master,' said he at last. 'Fair and easy! Good friends keep together. You have had bite and sup in my house, now you shall give me bite and sup in yours. And it may be your father has heard of that Jack The cackling of my great-grandad's Hen, let alone the strumming of his Harp, must have reached a long way among stubby hills in a little country like this! England!'

The rose and grey of daybreak was stirring in the eastern sky. Dick, though angry, reasoned with the giant as best he could, but the great oaf could not be dissuaded from keeping him company. It was bitter cold in this early morning, and Dick longed to let his father know that nothing was amiss with him

'Well,' he said at last, 'I have told you nine times over that no travellers come this way. It is over there the big cities are' And he pointed west 'But if come you must, why come! And I can only hope my father will be pleased to see you '

He put two fingers into his mouth and whistled There came an answering whinny And from a lean-to or out-house behind the cottage where it had found shelter during the night and a bite or two of old hay to munch, Jock answered his summons. This time Grackel had no reason to complain of Dick's lagging behind Jock cantered away

the valley with his young master on his back, and the giant like a gallows strode on beside them

When they came at length to a drift of woodland near the farm, Dick dismounted, and having pointed out the chimneys of the farmhouse in the hollow below, he told the giant to hide himself among the trees, while he went to prepare his father for the guest he had brought home with him. So Grackel edged down as best he could among the trees, and Dick, leading Jock by his bridle, went on to the house

In spite of the cold, the back door was ajar, and on an old horsehair sofa beside the burnt-out fire Dick found his father fast asleep, the stable lantern with which he had been out in the night looking for his son still burning beside him. Dick called him softly and touched his hand. His father stirred, muttering in his dreams, then his eyes opened. And at sight of Dick a light came into them as if he had found an unspeakable treasure

Safely come home again, Dick was soon forgiven for being so long away. As quickly as he could he told his father his adventures. But when the farmer heard that the giant was actually in hiding not more than a quarter of a mile away from the house, and greedy for bed and board, he opened his eyes a good deal wider

'Is that so?' he said at last. 'Twenty-foot in his shoes and all! Lorrimumsy! Well, well! And his great-grandad and all! That don't seem so *very* far back, now do it? Still, if there he is, my son, why, there he is, and we must do the best we can. And I don't see myself,' he added, glancing at Dick's troubled face, 'being what and where you were, you could have done much else. But who'd have guessed it, now? Who *would*? That Beanstalk!'

rejoiced. It seemed he would never dare even to set foot on the Beanstalk.

Grackel peered round at him. 'So this,' he said, 'is where my great-grandad climbed down when he was chasing after that thief and vagabond Jack! I can't see to the bottom of it!'

Dick shook his head. 'No, nor, I suppose, could he! Though why you should be so fond of your *wife's* grandad I can't think!'

'Ay,' said the giant leering at him, 'and supposing she and I are first cousins and he was grandad to both, what then?'

'Well,' said Dick, 'I know nothing of that. But Jack or no Jack, this is not only the only way down I know, but it's the way I climbed *up*. Once, I suppose, it must have been green and fresh and full of sap. Now it's all dried-up and withered away. And every yard I climbed I supposed it would come tumbling down over my head.'

'Ay,' said the giant 'But what did you want to come *for*?'

'Oh, just to see,' said Dick, as airily as he could. The giant with a sigh rose to his feet.

'Well,' he said, 'I'm not so weighty as was my great-grandad, not at least according to his portrait in the gallery. And if he managed to climb down in safety when this ladder was young and green, what is there to prevent my doing the same, now that it is old and tough and dry?'

With that, he thrust his long lean arm over the edge and clutching the tangle of withered shoots, violently shook the Beanstalk. It trembled like a spider's web in all its fibres, and Dick could hear the parched seeds clattering down from out of their pods towards the earth below.

'Well,' said he, looking up at the giant in the moonlight, 'what may be, may be. My only fear is that once down here, you may find it impossible to get back again. Or supposing it breaks in the middle?'

Grackel stared into his face, and then at the snow. 'He's thinking of the Little Hen,' thought Dick to himself, 'and he Harp.'

'Yes, it would be a dreadful thing,' Dick repeated, 'if it broke in the middle.'

'Ay,' leered the giant, 'and so it would! But what about my great-grandad? It didn't break in the middle with him.'

Dick made no answer to this. He held his peace.

'We'll have no more words about it,' said the giant. 'I'm never so stupid as when folks talk at me. You shall go first, being no more than an atomy, and I will follow after. I'll wait no longer.'

And with that, he flung his cudgel over the edge and began to pull up his wristbands. Dick listened in vain to hear the crash of the cudgel on the earth below. He feared for poor Jock.

There was no help in waiting. So Dick began to climb down the Beanstalk, and the giant followed after him so close with his lank scissor-legs that Dick had to keep dodging his head to avoid his great shoes, with their shining metal hooks instead of laces. Beanseeds came scampering down over Dick's head and shoulders like hailstones. It was lucky for him they were hollow and dry.

'Now,' said Dick at last, when they reached the bottom and he had seen the cudgel sticking up out of the ground beyond the broken wall. 'Here we are. This is where I come from. This is England. And you will want to be off at once to look for your great-grandfather's grave. Now that way

'The worst of all, father,' said Dick, 'is that woman up there. She'd freeze your blood even to look at her. What *she* wants is the Little Hen. And if *she* came down . . . !'

'Fox or vixen, one thing at a time, my son,' said the farmer 'Your friend out in the cold, if we keep him waiting, may get restless. So we'll be off at once to see what we can do to keep him quiet. The other must come after.'

The shining of the wintry sun lay all over the frosty fields when they went back together to the giant. And sour and fretful they found him. He only scowled at the farmer's polite Good-morning, grumbled that he was famished and wanted breakfast. 'And plenty of it!' he muttered, leering at Dick.

The farmer eyed him up and down for the twentieth time, and wished more than ever that Dick could have persuaded him to stay in his own country. He liked neither his pasty peevish face nor his manners. And his blood boiled to think of Dick tied up like a monkey to the leg of a table. Still, it had always been the farmer's rule in life to make the best of a bad job. With worry, what's wrong waxes worse, he would say. So he decided then and there to lodge the giant for the time being in his great barn; and to keep him in a good temper with plenty of victuals. The sooner they could pack him off the better. But they must be cautious.

So Dick and his father led the giant off to the barn, the sheepdogs following behind them. They threw open the wide double-doors, and stooping low, Grackel went in and stretched his long shins in the hay at the other end of it. After which they shut-to the doors again and hastened off to the farm to fetch him breakfast.

By good chance there was not only a side of green bacon

But a cold roast leg of mutton in the larder that had been prepared for dinner the day before, though then the farmer had no stomach for it. With this, a tub of porridge, half a dozen loaves of bread, a basketful of boiled hens' eggs and a couple of buckets of tea, they went back to the barn. Two or three journeys the giant gave them before he licked the last taste out of his last broken honey-pot, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and said he had had enough. Indeed, he had gorged himself silly.

'My son tells me,' bawled the farmer, 'that you have had a broken night. *His friends are my friends*. Maybe you'd enjoy a nap in the hay now. Make yourself easy, we'll be back anon.'

They closed behind them the great doors of the barn again, and went off themselves to breakfast, staying their talk and munching every now and again to listen to what sounded like distant thunder, but which, Dick explained to his father, was only the giant's snoring.

For the next day or two their guest was good-humoured and easy-going enough but, like some conceited people far less than half his size, he was by nature both crafty and stupid. And since he had now found himself in lodgings where he had nothing to do, no wife to make him mind and keep him busy, and he could eat and guzzle and sleep and idle the whole day long, he had little wish to be off in search of his great-grandfather, and none to go home again.

He knew well, the cunning creature, that even if his wife sent out his uncles in search of him and they discovered the Beanstalk, neither of them would venture to set foot on it. It would be certain death! For these were ordinary-si-giants, while he himself was laughed at in his own co-

for a weakling and nicknamed Pygmy Grackel. But this Dick did not know till afterwards

When evening came, and the farm hands had gone home from their work, Grackel would take a walk in the fields, though Dick's father, after once accompanying him, did not do so again. He had kept the 'great bumpkin out of the meadows and the turnips because it was lambing season. But it enraged him to see Grackel's clod-hopper footprints in his winter wheat, and the ricks in his stackyard ruined by Grackel's leaning upon them to rest. And it enraged him even more when the giant crept up to the farmhouse one midnight to stare in at him as he lay in his bed, and kicked over the water-butt on his way. The great lubber grew more and more mischievous.

In less than a week both Dick and his father were at their wits' end to know what to do with their guest. The good woman who cooked for them had to toil continually the best part of the day to prepare his food. A couple of ducks and three or four fat hens he accounted no more than a snack; he would gollop up half a roasted sheep for supper and ask for more. Indeed his appetite was far beyond his size, and he seemed to think of nothing but his belly.

Apart from this too, and the good home-brewed ale and cider they had to waste on him, he lay on their minds like a thunder cloud. And when he had eaten and guzzled to gluttony, as like as not he would grow sulky and malicious. He could do more damage in five minutes than an angry bull in half an hour. And when in a bad humour he would do it on purpose. Besides, tongues soon began to get busy about him in the villages round about. The shepherd complained that his lambs began to be missing; the ploughman's wife that her two small children had not been out

as he lay in the hay on the other side. Cold as stone with terror, they had rushed away home to their mothers, been seized with fits, and one of them had nearly died.

Dick could hardly get a wink of sleep for thinking of the giant and how to be rid of him. To see the trouble and care in his father's kindly face filled him with remorse. He searched his story-books again and again but could find no help in them. Nor could he discover any advice, not a single word, about giants in *The Farmer's Friend* or *The Countryman's Companion* – books which belonged to his father.

On the next Sunday afternoon his father walked off to the vicarage, six miles away by the field paths, to ask the advice of the old parson. He was the most learned man the farmer knew. But though the old gentleman listened to him very attentively, and was sorry for the trouble he was in, his chief fear was that the giant might find his way to the church. Once in, how without damage could he be coaxed out again?

There were giants in days of old, he told the farmer, who lived for centuries, and at a hundred or more were as hale and lusty as an ordinary man of less than forty. One such in Carmarthenshire had stolen all the millstones for thirty miles around and amused himself by flinging them into the sea. There had been a dearth of meal for months. Giants can be as cunning as a fox, the parson told the farmer, and as surly as a bear, and are great gluttons. But this the farmer knew already.

At last, one night, a little less than a fortnight after he had climbed the Beanstalk, having fallen asleep after hours of vain thinking, Dick suddenly woke up with so bright a notion in his head that it might have been whispered to him straight out of a dream.

There could be no waiting for the morning. He went off at once to his father's bedroom, woke him up, and, having made sure the giant was not listening at the window, shared it with him then and there. And the farmer thought almost as well of the notion as Dick did himself. They sat together there, Dick hooded up in a blanket at the foot of his father's bed, and for a full hour talked Dick's plan over. To and fro and up and down they discussed it, and could think of nothing better.

So as soon as light had begun to show next morning, Dick mounted his pony, and keeping him awhile on thick grass to muffle his hoofs, he galloped off by the way he had gone before.

This time he had brought with him an old pair of leathern pruning gloves and climbing irons, and he reached the top of the Beanstalk before noon. He arrived at the Castle gates while it was still full daylight. Till this moment all had gone well with him, though he had hated leaving his father alone to all the troubles of the day.

But now, as Dick was on the point of leaping up to clutch the rusty bell-chain, a distant bombilation fell on his ear – such a rumbling and bumbling as is made by huge puncheons of rum being rolled about over the hollow stones of a cellar. He had not listened long before he guessed this must be the voices of Grackel's uncles colloquing together. At sound of them he shook in his shoes. What was worse, they seemed to be in an ill humour. But whether it was anger or mere argument in their voices, there was nothing in the music of them that boded much good for Dick!

At last they ceased, and Dick (who was by now bitterly cold for an icy wind was whiffing round the Castle walls) decided to give a tug at the bell only just strong enough for

a single ding He then hid himself behind a buttress of the wall. The woman presently looked out of the wicket in the great gates And Dick, peeping, and seeing that she was alone, showed himself and came nearer

'Aha,' she called at sight of him, 'so you have come back! Ay, and a fortnight late! And where, my fine young man, is my husband? Answer me that! *Grackel!*' she wailed aloud, as if beside herself, 'Where are you? Where *are* you, Grackel?'

'Not here, eh!' she went on, watching Dick out of her black eyes as closely as a cat a bird. 'So you have come back to . . .' – and with that she pounced on him. She gripped him by the slack of his coat, and stooped low over his face. 'Eh, eh, eh! So now I have you, my fine young man!' Her teeth chattered as she spoke. 'Step you in, and you shall see what you *shall* see!'

Dick had scarcely breath left to speak with. He thought his end was come at last. And then, suddenly, the woman drew back, let go of him, turned her head away and began to cry.

Then Dick knew that what had seemed only anger was chiefly grief, that she supposed her husband must be dead and would never come back to her. And he rejoiced. His plan was turning out even better than he had hoped for. As best he could he tried to comfort the poor woman. He took the long hand that hung down beside her, and assured her that her husband was in the best of health, better far than when he had started, and in such ease and comfort at his father's farm that nothing would persuade him to go on his travels in search of the Little Hen and the Harp, or induce him to come home again. 'It's no use your crying,' he said 'That won't bring him back!'

At last the woman dried her eyes and began to listen to him. She took him into a little room this side of the kitchen, hung with smoked carcasses of beasts for the table, a room, which, though cold, was secret.

'I kept on telling your husband,' Dick said, 'that he need but send you word that he is well, that he is comfortable. I thought of you, ma'am, and kept on. For though I haven't a wife myself, I know they want news of their husbands. So would my mother or my father, if she had not died when I was four. And perhaps she does even now. But your husband has grown fatter and won't stir out of the house even to take a little exercise. He eats and eats, and at mention of *home* only flies into a rage.

"But," I said to him, "your wife will be weeping for you to come!" And all he answered was to bawl for another bucket of cider. So I came along by myself and am nearly dead-beat and starved with the cold.'

All this Dick said, and, it being chiefly lies, he said it much too boldly. But the woman was overjoyed at his news and believed him. Her one thought now was to get her husband home again, and to keep her wrath against him till then.

She told Dick she would go at once and wake her husband's uncles. 'They are taking a nap,' she said. Then he himself could go along with them, and they would soon persuade her husband to come home. 'And if he won't, they'll make him,' she said.

But this plan was by no means to Dick's liking. He asked the woman how long the giants would be sleeping and in what room they lay. 'I am too tired to talk to them just now,' he said. 'Frozen. I couldn't bear the din they make. Leave them at peace awhile and take me into the kitchen,

ma'am, else I shall soon perish of cold Give me some food and a mug of milk, and I'll tell you a better plan – a far better plan – than that. But quietly!

Now by good fortune the giants were napping in a room at the other end of the Castle where they were accustomed to play cards – *Dumps*, *Frogbite*, and other old games. And Dick sat up once more on his stool by the kitchen fire, and after refreshing himself, he explained to the woman his plan

'What I want to say, ma'am, is this,' he said. And he told her that the people of his country were utterly weary of having her idle husband loafing about in their villages and doing nothing for his keep. 'Down there, we are all little like me,' he said, 'and though my father – who wouldn't hurt a fly – has done his utmost to put your husband at his ease, to feed him and keep him happy, it is all wasted He has no more thanks in him than a flea

'He wanders about, scares the women, frightens the children, steals from the shops, and shouts and sings at dead of night when all honest folk are asleep in their beds And now the King's soldiers are coming, and as soon as they catch him, ma'am, they will drag him off to some great dismal underground dungeon, and he will never see daylight again For little though we may be, there's a cage in my country that would hold nine or more giants together, and every one of them twice as big as your husband, and every one of them loaded groaning up with chains You see, ma'am, we don't mean them any harm, but can't keep them safe else So I came to tell you.' He took another slow sip of his greasy buttermilk, and glanced back into the fire

'Then again,' he went on, 'if these two uncles of your

husband's, who you say are big heavy men, ventured to go my way home, and that must be ten thousand feet from top to bottom, they would only come to grief. They would topple down and break every bone in their bodies. And even if they did climb safely down and came into my country, what good would that be to them? I agree, ma'am, that in mere size and shape they are much larger than we are where I come from. But for wits and quickness and cunning – why, they are no better than rabbits!

'Just think, ma'am, though I have no wish to hurt your feelings, with your husband gone and all, how a mere boy of my size and not much older, came sneaking again and again into this huge Castle of yours, and ran off with your great-grandad's treasures three times over without losing a hair of his head. I agree it was not fair dealings, between equals, as you might say. I agree that that Jack borrowed the Harp without leave. But boy to giant, ma'am, *you* can't but agree he had his wits about him and was no coward.

'Besides, down there we have great cannon and what is called gunpowder, which would blow fifty giants to pieces before they could sneeze. I mean,' cried Dick, 'there would be a noise like that,' and he clapped his hands together, 'and the next minute there wouldn't be a scrap of your husband's uncles to be seen. Except perhaps for a button here and there for a keepsake ten miles off. You must give me something to prove I have seen you.'

Dick spoke with such a zest and earnestness that this poor woman began once more to be afraid that she would never see her husband again, alive or dead, for she dearly loved him even though he had given her his word of honour and not kept it. She would talk to him about that, all in good time.

'Now see here,' said Dick at last, 'your husband has been obbling and guzzling so much that he is almost too stupid now to understand good sense when he hears it. It's true I could make a fortune out of him by leading him round from town to town and charging a piece of silver for every peep at him. But I haven't a heart as hard as that, ma'am; and if you want your husband back, there is only one thing to do ' "

So after they had talked the matter over a little longer the woman fetched out from her bosom on a ribbon a locket in which was a twine of her husband's hair when he was a little boy. The hair though very coarse was almost as pale as gold. And in the back of the locket was a glass in which, said the woman, you could see your dearest friend. But she herself did not much believe in it, because when *she* looked into it she could see only herself.

So Dick peeped in, and there he saw what looked very much like his father. His cheeks grew red and he smiled into the locket, and his father seemed to give him a look back. 'And what,' Dick said to the woman, turning the locket over, 'what is this *milky* side for?'

'Oh, in that,' said the woman, 'you can see what you are dreaming about. But it's nothing but black dreams come to me.'

Dick looked, and sure enough, the mulkeness cleared away in a moment, and he saw a tiny image there of Jack's Beanstalk, but fresh and green. He slipped the bauble into his jacket pocket and told the woman that it would do very well for a proof to her husband that he himself had seen and talked with her. 'For you see,' he said, 'if I had nothing to show him, he might not believe me '

And the message the woman sent Grackel was that she

had heard with joy he was happy in the place he had come to, that he must remember to behave himself, and that his uncles would not come out in search of him so long as she knew he was safe. All she desired was to have but one more glimpse of him, and that he should come back if but for one night, because a feast was preparing, the feast they had every year on his long-lost great-grandfather's birthday.

'He'll remember that,' the woman said to Dick. 'And tell him that his uncles and his nephew and his cousins and his neighbours and his friends from afar off will all be at the feast, and will never forgive him if he is absent. Tell him I haven't missed him so much as I thought I should. Tell him I cried a little when I thought he was dead, and laughed when I knew he was safe. If he thinks I don't much want him back, back he will come. If he settles for good in your country, I am a lost woman.'

'Ah,' said Dick, 'leave that to me. But what am I to have for my trouble?'

The woman offered him a bag of money. There it was in the cupboard.

'Too heavy,' said Dick.

She brought out her family's Seven-League boots.

Dick laughed. He could almost have gone to bed in one of them. She showed him her husband's drinking cup.

Dick laughed again. He said it was too big for a wash-basin and not big enough for a bath. 'Besides,' he said, 'it's only silver.'

At last the woman, as Dick hoped she would, remembered her husband's watch – the watch that had belonged to one of his aunts. This of course was but a little watch compared with the giant's father's watch, which was safe upstairs.

Dick's mouth watered as he took hold of the chain and lifted the watch out of the woman's hand. What he had supposed were sapphires and emeralds were not common stones like these at all. There was a toadstone, a thunderstone, an Arabian crystal, and a blagroon – though Dick didn't then know the names of them.

'But I had hoped,' he said, eyeing it and pretending to be disappointed, 'that it was not a mere pocket watch, but a watch with a little magic in it. I think perhaps, after all, I should get more money by taking your husband round to show him off at some of our country fairs. You see, as I keep on saying, he doesn't *want* to come back.'

But the woman showed him with her finger that if he pressed a secret spring at the edge of the watch near the guard-ring he could make time seem to go much slower – whenever, that is, he was truly happy; and that if he pressed the secret spring on the left he could make time seem to go much quicker – say, when he was feeling miserable, or was tired or waiting for anything or anybody. And not only this, there was a third spring. 'If you press that,' the woman said, 'you can't tell what will happen next.'

Dick was mightily pleased with the watch, and just to test it, pressed the left-hand spring. And it seemed not a moment had passed by when there came a prodigious stamping and thumping and clattering from out of the back parts of the Castle, and he knew that Grackel's two uncles had woken up. So loud was the din they were making that it sounded as if a volcano had broken out, and it scared Dick more than he liked to show. So – though he pretended to be in no hurry – he let the spring go, fixed the chain round his waist, and slipped the watch in under the front of his breeches.

'If your husband isn't with you again by sundown to-morrow evening,' he told the woman, 'then send his uncles after me. The Beanstalk, of course, *might* bear them, and even though they might never come back again, they would at least have a chance to make an end of *me*.'

'If you come along with me now,' said the woman, 'you shall have a peep at them, and they won't see you. But quietly! They have ears like the east wind!'

So, treading mumsey as a cat, Dick followed after the woman, and she led him up a flight of stairs so steep he might have been climbing a pyramid, and took him into a gallery overlooking the room in which the giants sat. Dick crept forward, and, leaning out a little between the bases of the balusters of the gallery, peeped down. They were intent on a game that looked like common dominoes, though the pieces or men they played with were almost as big as tombstones. In no story-book he had ever read had Dick chanced on the like of these giants. They sat like human mountains at their game, and the noise of the dominoes was like Pharaoh's chariots. And when one of them, laying down a domino on the table, mumbled, *Double!*, it was like the coughing of a lion. Dick didn't need to watch them long. But as soon as he was out of earshot of them again, he burst out laughing, though it was only feigned.

'It's a good thing,' he said to the woman, 'I thought of what I told you. They are fine men, your husband's uncles, and no beanstalk I have ever seen would bear even half the weight of either. I'll keep the locket safe, you can trust me, ma'am, and if my father will let me, perhaps I might come back with your husband to the feast.'

The woman was by nature mean and close, but seeing how little by comparison Dick would be likely to eat and

drink, she said he would be welcome. So he bade her good-bye and off he went



It was pitch-black night when he got home again, but his father was waiting up for him. They were so anxious for the giant to be gone that they couldn't stay till morning. They went off together with a lantern to the barn, and having gone in, shouted at the top of their voices in Grackel's ear. They managed to wake him at last, and gave him his wife's message. He was so stupid after his first sleep, and he had eaten so vast a supper, that they might as well have been conversing with a mule. Even when he understood what they were saying, he sat blinking, morose and sullen at being disturbed.

'And how can I tell,' said he, 'that what you say is true? A fine story, a pretty story, but I don't believe a word of it.'

But when Dick told him of the feast that was being prepared, that all his wife wanted was to see him once again, that else his uncles might come to look for him, and when at last he showed the giant his wife's locket – then Grackel believed what was said to him (though Dick kept the watch to himself). And the very next morning the two of them set out together for the Beanstalk. And the farmer, eyes shining and all smiles, saw them off.

It was a morning fine and bright. A little hard snow had fallen in the small hours and lay on the grass like lumps of sago. The ponds were frozen hard as crystal. And as he cantered along on his pony – the giant's lank legs keeping pace with him on his right side like the arms of a windmill – Dick was so happy at the thought of at last getting rid of

his guest that he whistled away like a starling as he rode
And Grackel said, 'Why are you whistling?'

'“Why,” said Dick ‘Why, to think what a happy evening you are going to have, and how pleased your wife will be to see you, and what a feast they are making for you up there I could almost smell the oxen roasting for the cold meats on the side table, and there must have been seven score of fat pigs being driven in for the black puddings’

This only made Grackel the more eager to press on

‘And now,’ said Dick, when in the height of the morning they came to the foot of the Beanstalk, which was masked thick with hoarfrost smouldering in the sun, ‘here we part for a while When you are come up to the top, give a loud *hullabaloo*, and I shall know you are safe Then I shall ride off home again, and I will come to meet you here the day after to-morrow, about two’

Now, though it was a great folly, Dick had not been able to resist bringing Grackel’s watch with him He had hooked the chain round his waist under his breeches, and the watch bulged out like a hump in the wrong place By good luck the giant was on the further side away from the watch, so that he had not noticed this hump But now that they were at a standstill, and all was quiet, he detected the ticking

And he said, ‘What is that sound I hear?’

And Dick said, ‘That is my heart beating’

‘Why is it beating so loud?’ said Grackel

‘Ah,’ said Dick, in a doleful tone, ‘it must be for sadness that you are going away, even if only for a little while’ We have had our little disagreements together, you and me, about the sheep and the snoring and the cider But now we are friends, and that is all over Isn’t there any little

keepsake you could give me by which to remember you till you come back.’

At this the giant drew in his lips, and none too eagerly felt in his pockets. He brought out at last from beneath the leather flap of his side pocket a discoloured stub of candle in a box

‘It’s not much to look at,’ he grumbled, ‘but once it’s lit it will never go out till you say, *Out, candle, out!* even if it’s left burning in a hurricane for a hundred years’ Dick kept this candle until the day he met his sweetheart and lit it then. It may be lighting his great-grandchildren to sleep this very evening. But that came afterwards.

‘There,’ said Grackel, ‘take great care of it, and you shall give it me back when we meet again. Ay, and then I am sure to be hungry. So have plenty of hot supper waiting for me in my house – legs of pork soused in apples, and kids in batter, and drink to wash it down! And get in for me too some more hay and blankets and horse-cloths. I could scarcely sleep a wink last night for the cold.’

Dick nodded and laughed, and the giant began to climb the Beanstalk. Dick watched him till first he was as small to look up at as an ordinary man, and next no bigger than a dwarf, and not long after that he was out of sight. About an hour or so afterwards, for Grackel being lean and sinewy was a nimble climber, Dick heard a rumbling in the higher skies. He knew that it was the giant’s hullabalooing, and that he was safe. Then as quick as lightning he set about gathering together a great heap of the last year’s bracken and dead wood and dry grass, and piled it round the parched-up roots of the Beanstalk. Then he felt in his pocket for his flint and tinder-box that his father had laid out for him overnight. He felt – and felt again, and his beating heart

gave one dull thump and almost stood still. In the heat and haste of getting away he had left them both on the kitchen table!

Dick hauled out Grackel's watch to see the time. It was seven minutes to twelve. It would now be impossible for him to get home before nightfall and back again much before morning. It was a long journey, and the way would be difficult to follow in the dark. And how was he to be certain that the giant, having come to the Castle and found that his watch was gone, would not climb down the Beanstalk again to fetch it? Dick pressed the right-hand spring of the watch, for though he was in great trouble of mind, he wanted to think hard and to make the time go slowly. And as, brooding on there under the Beanstalk, he stared at the second hand, though it was not much bigger than a darning needle, it was jerking so sluggishly that he could have counted twenty between every beat. The sun, that was now come to the top of his winter arch in the sky, and was glistening like a tiny furnace on the crystal of the watch, danced in his eyes so fiercely that at last he could scarcely see.

'Why,' thought Dick suddenly, 'the glass magnifies. It's a *burning-glass*!'

Instantly, after but one sharp upward glance towards the top of the Beanstalk, he took out his pocket-knife and heaved up the watch lid. The glass was as thick as half the nail-width of his little finger. He held it close down over the dried-up leaves and bracken in the full beams of the noonday sun. And in a few moments, to his great joy, a faint twirling wreath of grey smoke appeared on the buff of the bracken frond. Then there came a black pin-prick circle that rapidly began to ring out larger. Then a little

red appeared at the edge of the circle. And at this Dick began to puff very very softly, still tilting the glass into the direct rays of the sun. The frond began to smoulder, and the smoulder began to spread, and now Dick blew with all his might.

Presently a thin reek of vapour appeared, and the bracken broke into flames. And when once these parched-up leaves and grasses had fairly taken fire, the Beanstalk itself was soon ablaze. The flames – and theirs was a strange music – roared loud in the wintry air – red, greenish, copper and gold – licking and leaping their way from strand to strand up and up, while a huge pale umber tower of smoke rose billowing into the blue air of the morning.

Dick gazed at the flames in delight and terror. Never in all his born days had he seen such a bonfire. Even Jock, who had been quietly browsing by the ruinous cottage walls, turned his dark eyes at sight of this fiery spectacle, lifted his head and whinnied. Indeed, the flaming Beanstalk must have been visible to all Gloucestershire's seven neighbour counties round. And the fire burned up and up, and the pods and red-hot bean-seeds came hailing down, with wisps of fire and smoke. And the roaring gradually grew more and more distant, until at last the blaze up above was dwindled to little more than a red spark, like a tiny second sun, far far up in the vacancy of the heavens. And then it vanished and was gone.

And Dick with a deep sigh, partly of regret and partly of relief, knew that Jack's old Beanstalk was gone for ever. At least this might be so, though he had been wise enough before he had begun gathering together the fuel for his fire to put two or three of the dry bean-seeds into his pocket. Some day he meant to plant them; just to see.

He broke the ice over a little spring that was frozen near the cottage, took a sip or two of the biting cold water underneath, and dabbled his hot cheeks and eyelids. Then he whistled for Jock, and jumped into the saddle. Yet again he dragged out Grackel's watch, pressed down the left spring, and with one last glance up over his shoulder, set off for home. And pleased beyond all words was his father the farmer to see him.



Off the Ground

Three jolly Farmers
Once bet a pound
Each dance the others would
Off the ground.
Out of their coats
They slipped right soon,
And neat and nicesome,
Put each his shoon

One – Two – Three! –
And away they go,
Not too fast,
And not too slow;
Out from the elm-tree's
Noonday shadow,
Into the sun
And across the meadow.
Past the schoolroom,
With knees well bent
Fingers a-flicking,
They dancing went
Up sides and over,
And round and round,
They crossed click-clacking,
The Parish bound.
By Tupman's meadow
They did their mile,
Tec-to-tum
One a three-barred stile.
Then straight through Whipham,

Downhill to Week,
Footing it lightsome,
But not too quick,
Up fields to Watchet,
And on through Wye,
Till seven fine churches
They'd seen skip by –
Seven fine churches,
And five old mills,
Farms in the valley,
And sheep on the hills,
Old Man's Acre
And Dead Man's Pool
All left behind,
As they danced through Wool

And Wool gone by,
Like tops that seem
To spin in sleep
They danced in dream
Withy – Wellover –
Wassop – Wo –
Like an old clock
Their heels did go
A league and a league
And a league they went,
And not one weary,
And not one spent
And lo, and behold!
Past Willow-cum-Leigh
Stretched with its waters
The great green sea

Says Farmer Bates,
'I puffs and I blows,
What's under the water,
Why, no man knows !'
Says Farmer Giles,
'My wind comes weak,
And a good man drowned
Is far to seek '
But Farmer Turvey,
On twirling toes
Ups with his gaiters,
And in he goes.
Down where the mermaids
Pluck and play
On their twangling harps
In a sea-green day,
Down where the mermaids,
Finned and fair,
Sleek with their combs
Their yellow hair. . . .

Bates and Giles –
On the shingle sat,
Gazing at Turvey's
Floating hat
But never a ripple
Nor bubble told
Where he was supping
Off plates of gold.
Never an echo
Rilled through the sea
Of the feasting and dancing

And minstrelsy
They called – called – called
Came no reply
Nought but the ripples'
Sandy sigh
Then glum and silent
They sat instead,
Vacantly brooding
On home and bed,
Till both together
Stood up and said –
'Us knows not, dreams not,
Where you be,
Turvey, unless
In the deep blue sea,
But axcusing silver –
And it comes most willing –
Here's us two paying
Our forty shilling,
For it's sartin sure, Turvey,
Safe and sound,
You danced us square, Turvey,
Off the ground!'

Come – Gone

Gone the snowdrop – comes the crocus;
With the tulip blows the squill,
Jonquil white as wax between them,
And the mid-nod daffodil.

Peach, plum, cherry, pear and apple,
Rain-sweet lilac on the spray,
Come the dog-rose in the hedges –
Gone's the sweetness of the may.

The Cupboard

I know a little cupboard,
With a teeny tiny key,
And there's a jar of Lollipops
For me, me, me.

It has a little shelf, my dear,
As dark as dark can be,
And there's a dish of Banbury Cakes
For me, me, me

I have a small fat grandmamma,
With a very slippery knee,
And she's Keeper of the Cupboard,
With the key, key, key

And when I'm very good, my dear,
As good as good can be,
There's Banbury Cakes, and Lollipops
For me, me, me

Trees

Of all the trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash
Burns fierce while it is green

Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain

Of all the trees in England,
Past frankincense and myrrh,
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,
Like Lime and Juniper

Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn,

The Old Stone House

Nothing on the grey roof, nothing on the brown,
Only a little greening where the rain drips down,
Nobody at the window, nobody at the door,
Only a little hollow which a foot once wore,
But still I tread on tiptoe, still tiptoe on I go,
Past nettles, porch, and weedy well, for oh, I know
A friendless face is peering, and a clear still eye
Peeps closely through the casement as my step goes by

Alas, Alack!

Ann, Ann!

Come! quick as you can!
There's a fish that *talks*
In the frying-pan
Out of the fat,
As clear as glass,
He put up his mouth
And moaned 'Alas!'
Oh, most mournful,
'Alas, alack!'
Then turned to his sizzling,
And sank him back.

For Mopsa

Ah, would I were a pastrycook !
My Mopsa then I'd make
A Sallie Lunn, a Crumpet, and a
Cake

Ah, would I were a Grocer !
How happy she should be
With Jars of Honey, Raisins, Currants,
Tea.

Ah, would I were an Oilman !
She should never, never mope
For Clothes Pegs, Candles, Soda, or for
Soap

Ah, would I were a Potheary !
For Possets she'd not pine,
Or Pills, or Ipecacuanha
Wine

Or, just suppose, a Fishmonger !
The *pains* I would be at
To pick her out a Whitebait, or a
Sprat !

Or a green-baize-aproned Fruiterer -
The punnets that should come
Of Cherries, Apples, Peach, and Pear, and
Plum !

There's a small dark shop I know of too,
In another place, called Sleep,
And there's nothing sold in Dreams it doesn't
Keep

But as it's only rhymes I make,
I can but dower my Dove
With scribbles, and with kisses, and with
Love

Me

As long as I live
I shall always be
My Self – and no other,
Just me.

Like a tree –
Willow, elder,
Aspen, thorn,
Or cypress forlorn

Like a flower
For its hour –
Primrose, or pink,
Or a violet –
Sunned by the sun,
And with dewdrops wet.

Always just me.
Till the day come on
When I leave this body,
It's all then done,
And the spirit within it
Is gone.

The Song of the Mad Prince

Who said, 'Peacock Pie'?

The old King to the sparrow

Who said, 'Crops are ripe'?

Rust to the harrow

Who said, 'Where sleeps she now?

Where rests she now her head,

Bathed in eve's loveliness'? —

That's what I said

Who said, 'Ay, mum's the word',

Sexton to willow

Who said, 'Green dusk for dreams,

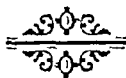
Moss for a pillow'?

Who said, 'All Time's delight

Hath she for narrow bed,

Life's troubled bubble broken'? —

That's what I said



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Nobody, nobody told me
Nothing on the grey roof, nothing on the brow
Now all the roads to London Town

Of all the trees in England
Old Ben Bailey
Old King Caraway

Poor bird! –

Some one came knocking
Sweet Peridarchus was a Prince

Then as Now, and Now as Then
There was a ship of Rio
There was once an old Tailor of Hickery Mo
Three dwarfs there were which lived in an isle
Three jolly Farmers
Three jolly gentlemen
Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty
Two deep clear eyes

Who said, 'Peacock Pie'?

'Won't you look out of your window, Mrs Gill'?

